Staging and Citing Gendered Meanings:

A practice-based study of representational strategies in live and mediated performance

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(written Dissertation + practice-based materials on DVD-Rom)

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THESIS CONTAINS

'DVD

Abstract

I offer this written thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree of PhD, and also submit a body of (performance process and production) work in video format on a DVD-Rom. These components together comprise the full submission. The written thesis draws upon and analyses the process-based work contained on the DVD-Rom.

My argument is that gender visibility in live and mediated performance can be enhanced by the use of the dramaturgical toolkit. The thesis as a whole offers a body of work and a method for recontextualising that work, and for reframing it in multimedia format. The visual and written texts on the DVD-Rom give equal weight to the performance and written research comprising this submission. Building upon that set of materials and meanings, but leaving deliberate gaps and spaces for debate and interpretation between them as well, I have attempted to offer a useful but also a flexible toolkit for use by future practitioners and scholars.

Method: Taking as my case study *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, a site-based devised performance (this collaboration in 2000 was created with a scenographer, five professional actors and 20 extras, performed over five nights in an 18th-century house), I design and theorise a dramaturgical toolkit. The theoretical base is developed from established theoretical concerns, feminist performance theory and social semiotics to analyse an original contemporary performance work.

Original contribution: The dramaturgical toolkit is designed to be used by artists, students and academics. My analytical tool is being used in teaching and is valuable to others who want to teach/research gender representation in live and mediated performance. Tests during development and subsequently have taken place with performance design and fashion students at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, where the kit encouraged the articulation and analysis of student work. The dramaturgical toolkit helps the facilitator to push students towards articulation and analysis of "bite-sized" bits that are distilled enough to be clear, and therefore useful for making and analysing performance. This process of distillation helps artists and students to focus down and to reach new levels of understanding.

The theoretical base of this work brings together and interrogates the usefulness and possible applications of performance theory, feminist theory and selected approaches to social semiotics. In my selection of key thinkers from these areas and careful analysis of the tools as well as the ideas that each has to offer, I have engaged in a cross-disciplinary study and attempted to apply a range of linked methodologies, and then to create my own analytical toolkit: referred to as "the dramaturgical categories" throughout the thesis. Important instances of transformative theatre processes – as exemplified in the work of Bertolt Brecht and as re-read from a contemporary feminist theoretical perspective by Elin Diamond (1997) – provide the two main poles within which my own body of work has been developed and analysed. The term "recontextualisation" (Van Leeuwen, 2001, 1999, 1986) has emerged as a key concept to analyse the movement from conventional, text-based proscenium-arch theatre to unconventional site-based, devised performance practices such as those used in my work. Isolating and analysing the processes of recontextualisation in my work has involved taking the Brechtian theatrical processes of "alienation" and "gestus" forward from a live medium and transposing them into a mediated form, while paying all due attention to the distinct creative and cultural distinctions of each format.

Gender visibility in practice

Figure 1 1996: *Dogs are Alone Too and they Live!* Scenofest, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. Performance installation, Lethaby Gallery

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In the process of research for this thesis I consulted the following archives:

Libraries: The British Library, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design
Theatre Collections: The National Video Archive of Performance, The Theatre Museum
Conducted interviews with: Max Stafford-Clark, Janet Goddard and Madelon Schwirtz, Rosella Emanuelle, Angela O'Mahoney, Navtej Singh Johar, Di Sherlock, Faith Tingle – the performers without whose interest and support, often without pay, my practice as research would not have been possible.

Consulted the stage and ground plans of the following theatres and sites:
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This thesis is dedicated to

Helen Elizabeth Hume 1934-1998

Table of Multimedia Contents

Textual materials (full contents list follows):

The written/textual component of this thesis is comprised of:

A Word document of 61,142 words, with colour illustrations, including a set of Appendices: Interviews, Scripts and other process-based background materials.

The script of the play *Lovely Stones* (1998) is also included as this is not otherwise available in published form.

Multimedia Materials:

Please find an original multimedia DVD-Rom attached to back cover of this thesis. This DVD-Rom contains specially programmed and edited practice-based performance materials: the body of work upon which this thesis is based.

The DVD-Rom has been programmed in Director for ease of use by readers/audiences and future scholars. It was originally made in a bespoke SMARTlab platform called ViewHear, which enables real-time interactive edits by users. Part of my original practical work draws upon the privilege of using this original piece of performance technology in the making and planning of my thesis. I have therefore included a demonstration example of my own work as "recontextualisable" in the ViewHear programme.

The DVD-Rom also includes:

- A clip from Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls,* in the BBC television version (1991).

- A digital video Showreel of my original practice-based research materials and productions of the years 1996-2003. For ease of reference, these are presented as eight Quicktime movies (of 90 minutes in total). Full production credits are provided in the bibliography of this thesis.

Showreel menu

Fragments and Monuments Trilogy:

Dogs Are Alone Too and They Live! 1996

Lovely Stones 1998

Di's Midsummer Night Party 2000

Projections *Di's Midsummer Night Party*:

Di's Midsummer Night Party, outdoor screening, 2001

Di's Midsummer Night Party, Keyworx, 2002

Cochrane Theatre tests:

Webcast with Drama Centre actors, 2001

Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane, Mediatheque real-time documentary, 2002

Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane, short version, 2003

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Personal statement

I undertook this research project six years ago, intending to engage critically with a body of practical theatre work made in England in the years that corresponded roughly with my own professional theatre practice. I expected this process to be difficult: to be challenging academically, and to push at the boundaries of what can be meant by "scholarship" in a field such as theatre, where the contingencies of funding, space, architecture, and the personalities of humans trying to make sense of both their deliberate and subconscious role playing all entwine. The complexities together enliven the field of theatre as an arena for study just as they enrich the lives and practical creative experiences and achievement of all of us who choose to work in this explosive, and increasingly threatened and rare, field. I expected all that, and found it all (often in unexpected form). But I also found, and dealt with, and reformed my approaches to the work in both scholarly and practical ways, on levels that could not have been anticipated at the start of the research, nor even at the stage of near completion. Only in the final summing up and re-reading of my own words as records or citations of this project, did it become fully clear to me where my own role most resonates…

As I moved from focus on the practical case studies and the making of the theatre work this thesis documents and examines, it became increasingly difficult to separate out the personal from the political and the "scholarly" in the writing of the thesis. I have attempted to chart this journey and to integrate the personal voice in the text wherever appropriate (and in some instances perhaps, where traditional scholarship might deem

this intervention inappropriate, yet where the personal voice insisted upon making its visual/textual and personal/political mark). The process of writing and rewriting this study was complicated and enriched by a nexus of concerns and real life contingencies that, I discovered only in polishing up the last draft of the written thesis, insist upon being named at the outset.

What has become clear to me in revising my own work is this: I write (and make and live) as a feminist in a world that no longer values feminism as it did even a decade ago, and as a theatre maker in a world that hardly remembers what "theatre" is and that often confuses "performance" with "theatre". In both cases, I have lived and worked and written and rewritten through the process of reframing my experience in relation to this academic study.

In the world of feminist (and what some now term "post-feminist") politics, it has long been recognised as important to distinguish between the many schools of feminism, the international differences in definition and application of each term relating to feminism, and the differences of individual women within any such linguistic frame. I found as the work progressed that my initial ability to position myself became clouded as I re-examined my own role over time (looking back at the "self" or selves that made the plays discussed in these pages). In time, I found that I had to argue from a complex multiple position that uses slightly different voices, because I occupy a distinct and distinctly unusual position within the broad picture of feminisms and theatres. The majority of women theatre directors and playwrights and actors with whom I have worked, for

instance, reject or ignore the academic framing and "intellectualising" of their practical work, and of their personal politics. To speak and represent their perspectives accurately in my work on stage, and in analysing it on the page, it is therefore necessary to use a voice which indicates inclusion or at least relation to that group of 40-60 year old British (primarily liberal and socialist) feminist activism. At the same time though, I have been engaged in my work in and through the focus or frame of my own personal experience, which has included motherhood and the role playing of the part of mother to two girls of different generations, and through my awareness of playing that role as a "single mother", and in relation to my own personal perceptions of self image, role and body image (topics which are touched upon briefly in these pages, as they shaped my approach to the women I have worked with and to the plays we have made together, in that inevitable way that the theatre enables, when we live and work so closely together and draw upon our lives in making something bigger than any one of our single lives).

The image of the mirror which appears in so many different formats in my main case study example (the devised play *Di's Midsummer Night's Party*), is the central image of this thesis: it holds up a view of the personal, framed, and then attempts to reposition and eventually remove the frame to make a larger statement. The position of my own image and my own professional practice therefore dominates these pages, but in a layered way, as the frame is also placed around the work of a number of other women theatre makers, and is refocused each time a major theoretical approach or "frame analysis" offers a new insight. These are layered, as are my own (and all of our) roles in life and in the making of our own bodies, representations of self, and bodies of work.

The same kinds of conflicts, tensions, apparent contradictions and then resolutions riddled my approach to the frame of the theatre itself in this long period of research and writing. My initial ideas (outlined in Chapter 1) about the need to move past the proscenium arch and its restriction of view, literally and metaphorically, have been played out in the recent history of theatre to the extent that I need to do a double-take on my own work. So many theatres have closed, so many proscenium arches have been replaced with studios and shops and commercial spaces of other sorts entirely, that the argument seemed at one stage to lose importance; only in reviewing did it become clear that the inscribing of the site of struggle around the presentation of role, whether in the personal sphere of feminist politics or in the public sphere of theatre production, was precisely the point of writing about the presence of the proscenium and of its impact on the plays staged within it (making visible what is becoming less visible as the live theatre is increasingly replaced by other media and cultural forms). Starting with what was visible as an imprint and site of struggle in my own work and that of the women whose plays I seek to illuminate and document here, I then work to remove the shadow of the proscenium arch, whilst still arguing for the importance of presence and of the live element of theatre, even in new multimedia presentation formats.

Again, there is necessarily some element of "smoke and mirrors", of the magic of presentation and re-presentation, in the writing and image-based analyses offered in these pages. I can not share the live moments of process or of final play "product" except in video and DVD format. I have instead attempted to let the makers of each play speak, sometimes in text in the appendices, sometimes in the voices of their characters, in

playscripts, and sometimes in performances. The combination of voices and approaches is the total "event" of the thesis. My own voice fluctuates within that, and necessarily so, as the work I discuss has evolved over the years, and in relation to the voices of others, also inscribed and reflected and represented in these pages.

Statement of Approach to Practice-Based Research

A more scholarly summary of my methodological approach is outlined along with my Literature Survey in the Introduction to this thesis and, in greater detail, in Chapter 2 (with regard to Feminist Theatre and Performance Theory) and in Chapter 5 (with regard to selected approaches from the field of Social Semiotics).

Here I wish to outline a few less scholarly but equally important issues and circumstances that have shaped my approaches and understanding of my own process and final contribution to the field of knowledge with this thesis.

I knew in undertaking this process of "practice-based" research that I would encounter a number of "frequently asked questions" or common issues along the way:

- I knew that the field of practice-based research is relatively new, and newer to the performing arts than to other fields in fine arts for instance (not least because of the problems of documentation of the live, as mentioned above and discussed at length in this and many other recent texts).

- I knew that doing a PhD is always a lonely process and a personal process of

reinvestigation and rediscovery. I also knew that the personal nature of my own engagement in theatre and in building up a new toolkit from examples of my work and that of contemporaries would further confound and intensify these efforts.

- I knew that the transdisciplinary nature of the theories upon which I could usefully draw would necessitate a multi-disciplinary supervisory team and set of structures and methods (and I was fortunate to have experts in theatre, gender, media, linguistics and semiotics to consult as I worked). I began the research at the University of Surrey and transferred in the third year (after MPhil upgrade to full PhD candidature) to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, where I had done previous work in scenography. This was a coming home of sorts, and a reunion of my process and my academic work to the centre of London. I had a continuity of supervision that made this shift possible without a loss of focus, and that allowed the research to grow and develop in new paths but with the same roots still firmly in place. It also set up new challenges as I entered a brand new practice-based PhD programme and became the first student, with responsibility to lead the way for a cohort of others, most of whom were working in more highly technologised fields and most of whom were not British or working from a base of "Britishness". Again, this new context brought challenges that ultimately enriched the process and the product of the work.

What I only discovered in the final phases of revision, however, was this: the one thing that distinguishes my role as a practice-based researcher in the field of Gender and Performance is both very basic, and also complex and intricately related to my experience of the research. That distinguishing feature is my age, or generation: this positioning of

my life in time had a much greater impact than I could have anticipated at the outset of my research. My position in time and place affected my approach on several levels at once: on my working process as it develops vis-à-vis my relationships to both theatre and to scholarship. While many – roughly half – of the other women students engaged in practice-based research in UK programmes are also in their late 30s – early 50s, only a few of those in the older age bracket are working in the area of theatre or of live performance. The majority of my contemporaries have chosen to work on digital and mediated forms of representation, which have been more widely theorised across disciplinary boundaries. By contrast, the majority of those working on live theatre and live performance (Hill, Paris, Gilson-Ellis, Kuppers, Wilkie et al – to name just a few from the cohort I have most often encountered at symposia over the years), are roughly ten years younger. Their relationship to feminisms, and to theories, was born into their practices, at a time when the notion of practice-as-research had already begun to be accepted, albeit slowly and guardedly, in many academic institutions internationally, and when the process-based approaches I had begun on my own were beginning to be theorised in a wide international scene. My process, I realise in retrospect, has always been framed differently while the time period was brief (it was only a few short years in the 1980s when my professional practice was developing, prior to the entry of these and other practice-based researchers into the arena) – still those few years were intense, politicised, and steeped in political debates about the nature of theatre and the role of women. My perspective began, therefore, as personal-political, non-theoretical, and distinctly British. My work has always been shaped and deeply imprinted with a sense of location in a live moment and political context of 1970s/early 1980s feminism and theatre

practice (both of which in Britain, resisted theorisation and "scholarly framing" for some years).

In the final revision of this thesis, I decided not to remove the traces of my own voice and its personalised ways of representing and positioning itself. Instead I have attempted to frame and reframe the voice of the academic within and beside that of the theatre maker, mother, feminist, and activist, and of the British woman who plays all these and many other roles, in a fast-changing period of British politics and of theatre scholarship, in the age of new media. I have attempted to maintain some of the nuances of each of these roles and to allow them each to take space and to speak, though without the usual rhetorical device of using a different font or formatting for each voice. I offer the voices of the professional director and the critical thinker and the woman making politically committed work, all together, as they speak in and through my work.

My main method in presenting this research for readers and viewers of the DVD has been to incorporate practical theatre experience and the process of making meaning with images and events in real time and space, and applying selected critical models from performance theory, film theory and social semiotics, in order to give the live theatre event a range of new formats for presentation on the page and the digital disk, for reference by future scholars. The dramaturgical toolkit I have constructed has developed through this iterative process. It is a toolkit that has helped me to reframe my own work, and it is intended to have a wider utility for theatre makers and practice-based researchers of all ages, nationalities and personal-political positions.

A final word on words, before I introduce the thesis proper:

My natural medium of expression is not written text. It is rather some undefinable medium composed of movement of bodies on stage or in sites of performance beyond the theatrical frame. This is the process of script development: words arising through movement and spoken words, improvisation, direction, staging, representation of words in character, and only then does the text take its shape on the page. When I use words in my practice, it is usually verbally: to direct theatre, which is in part to help others to understand, represent and reshape their live physical and intellectual and emotional presences in some real space, whilst also imagining (but not too intellectually, for the theatre event is not intellectualised for the actors in the moment) their positions in documented screenic space as well. Written words, and particularly those framed in the vocabularies of academic writing, are not my main form of communication. They do not always sit well alongside the ideas they are meant to express. The space that words take up on the page is not the same space they take up in the air, in movement on stage, off site, or even on the screen. But words are the medium of academic writing. I have done my best to use them creatively here, in a form of documentation that may, I hope, best preserve and share this work and make it available to future scholars. I offer this thesis in that spirit.

Introduction

Site Sight Cite

To "site" in theatre is to choose a site for, to position geographically or in terms of visual perspective and audio orientation. It is also to "site" in terms of selection of site-specific theatre, wherein the physical location for live performance of the "play" or other theatrical spectacle is not necessarily a theatre with a stage and audience positioned in relation to that frame, but is rather a more specific location (a building – house, factory or church for instance – or a park with a history and story and other function of its own), and simultaneously a less fixed, more flexible "staging" of the relationship between the spectacle, event or play and the people who watch it. In site-specific theatre, as in much feminist theatre of the past few decades, the politics of the director come into the frame in the choice of location, and the politics of audiences can be more directly engaged as the physical as well as the intellectual and personal orientations of audiences are repositioned in creative, playful and strategic ways. All of these elements inform the work of this thesis, yet I have chosen to use the word "citing" rather than "siting", because I offer this thesis (the written work and the practical work upon which it is based) as a documentable, referenceable and therefore "citable" body of evidence of the research practice.

My position is informed by my professional experience as a director of new writing for the theatre, mainly written by women. The theatre director takes the role of the outside eye, the one who looks and watches from the spectators' point of view. The process of looking activates a series of frames through which the process of looking takes place. These frames shape the process of looking and making to such an extent that their existence for the feminist director becomes the reason for making theatre. The feminist director addresses these normative frames through her practice in an attempt to cite alternative gendered readings.

The study

This is a practice-based study of the development of a unique approach to the making and analysing of gender-aware theatre work in live and multimedia formats. The thesis engages at a significant level with my own professional theatre directing and dramaturgical practice, and particularly with that work made in the years of the research for the PhD: between 1996 and 2003. The study also extends its focus to include the backgrounds to this vital phase of practice-based research, and so builds upon and includes discussion of the practices and the theories developed throughout my professional career, from 1980 to the present. At the same time, the research has involved extensive study not only of the texts (dramatic and literary critical) of this period of Britain's theatre history, but also with the practices of and practicalities experienced by the profession generally, and by other women directors, dramaturges, playwrights and actors in particular. The research might therefore best be seen as a practice-based approach to the field of women's theatre work in Britain since 1980. The

aim of the research has been to show, through focus on key representations of and by women working in British theatre in this period, that there is indeed a gender-aware way of making and analysing live theatre work, and that this perspective shifts when the theatre content is transferred to different settings, and to different media. The research is informed by knowledge of performance theory and by my own feminist personal politics; it is underpinned by an extended series of theatrical experiments undertaken since 1996 (when the research for the PhD began), in which I have tested my own theories, their uses and their limits, in real theatre practice, with a wide range of different audiences, in different site-specific locations, and in different mediated formats.

As a theatre maker interested in women's experiences in and of the theatre, I have for twenty four years both studied theatre and made theatre pieces that focus on women's perspectives, or rather, on the multiple possible perspectives of women. I choose this approach as a way of reducing an historical imbalance: as theatre history (with a few notable and fairly recent exceptions, including Case, Keyssar, Ferris, Goodman et al) has tended to ignore or marginalise issues of the "female" within the "human experience" upon which the world of the play is meant to reflect. I have also chosen, quite deliberately, to focus on high-profile real women such as Princess Diana, who have been mythologised and made "fictional" in their lifetimes. In this thesis, both in the written text and in the archive of performance experiments, productions and alternative media presentations of the work, I therefore offer practical commentary on the notion of a multiple perspective that can enable a female gaze, and empower any reader or viewer with the tools and assets required to achieve a gender-aware reading – whether from a

female or a male perspective, whether deliberately politically aligned or more generally focused.

The Process of Contextualisation: Live and mediated performance

The written thesis offered here is intended to be read alongside the practical theatre experiments, though of course the "liveness" of the events is somewhat flattened in the capturing to video and other formats. Still, it is important to the structure of this work that the visual images discussed and the time-based sequences involved be considered alongside the text that describe them. This is my approach to analysing practice through theory. I have hesitated to include any lengthy discussion of previous theoretical or historical, academic writing about the theatre pieces analysed herein. Too much theatre criticism and textual analysis falls into the trap of arguing with words about the images and events, rather than engaging in something closer to analysis of the theatrical moment. This is a difficult "act" to manage, but the thesis – both the text and the multimedia DVD-Rom that accompanies it – attempts to offer an alternative form of analysis, and a more visual and imaginative way of approaching the event of the theatre piece, however it has been reduced and edited for archiving.

The role of the director (as researcher)

The journey chronicled herein takes the experience of one theatre director, living and working as a feminist in the past two decades of British life. The method of the research has been to move from theatre practice (and feminist practice) to the theories that arise out of that, rather than moving vice versa, from theory to practical example. In this way,

the analyses offered and the theories with which I engage can be seen to be drawn from and are testable against theory, whereas the practical theatre work is informed by (and can give instructions to and for) the development of more relevant and useful theories for the making and valuing of feminist theatre work in this new century.

Through an in-depth investigation of my own practice, compared and contrasted where relevant (both in the writing and in the making and documenting of the practical work), the research has thus led me to the point where I can confidently propose a series of new dramaturgical categories that, I argue as the main contribution this thesis offers to its field of knowledge. These categories if applied by the scholar or practitioner may in future increase gender visibility through the progressive exteriorisation of gendered readings of theatre work. For instance, the DVD-Rom makes visible (literally) the visual action and interaction of the theatre pieces discussed. More than that, the DVD-Rom offers the viewer a chance to become an active agent in the making and the re-viewing: in cutting your own version of any scene, you as a reader and viewer also become a director and critic, also become responsible for a particular journey through and analysis of a scene, story or action. So, by including the ViewHear software versions of my own play *Di's Midsummer Night's Party* on the interactive DVD-Rom, I choose to highlight the reader/viewer's journey and also to show their limits in making totally free interpretations and choosing alternative paths. The cut-your-own version operability of the ViewHear software (copyright SMARTlab: only available to associates and students of this programme, and thus used at the level of PhD analysis for the first time in this thesis) both empowers and simultaneously questions the limits of the power of the viewer: it

offers the viewer a free range of choices, including the ability to re-order and focus attention on individual images and lines within any given scene, but it also deliberately emphasises the role of the director by showing how initial decisions about what would be included on the DVD put a frame around the final interpretive range of options available.

I thus offer the ViewHear cut-your-own version of my own play as both an interactive experience – as a chance for the reader to make active choices about and interventions in the practical work – and also as an illustration of the lingering power of the theatre director to impose limits in the framing of any theatre scene in multimedia format. Whatever freedom the reader may have to choose, move and re-label images and words (or entire scenes in the full-motion video version of the software), the settings and the basic journeys of the characters through the story and the space are still predefined. The test here is to find ways to enable new journeys within the preset limits. This limited form of interaction, I argue, closely replicates the forms of control that theatre directors have in making live theatre, where the architecture of the stage and the politics of the audience can interfere in the directorial journey planned; at the same time, it gets as close as is currently possible to showing how gender is best made visible when some limits to visibility are also exposed. This is the balance I have managed, and have set as my target, in the practice-based research that led to the writing and making of this thesis in multi-media format, around the stories of female characters seeking to re-present themselves, and particularly in the story (retold in many ways and reframed over time in many different formats) in *Di's Midsummer Night's Party*.

Site-Specificity and the Distributed Literature Survey

As noted in the more personal statement of approach to this practice-based research project (above), the usual methods of surveying a well established body of literature in one or at most two or three related academic fields simply could not do justice to this transdisciplinary study.

Rather, I have studied texts (primary and secondary) and performance documents and live performance events (in real time and in various mediated formats). The range of materials consulted is presented in the extensive Bibliography to the thesis. The main "literature survey", however, was conducted on a small but rich vein of texts written primarily by other feminist academics with one or both feet in the theatre making process: Lesley Ferris, Sue-Ellen Case and Lizbeth Goodman comprising the main vein of study of women's theatre history and stage representation (focussed on or beginning with the British tradition, although Case writes equally on American feminist theatres, as do Charlotte Canning, Carol Martin et al), whilst Elin Diamond, Jill Dolan, Peggy Phelan, Judith Butler, Laura Mulvey et al have provided the key theoretical frameworks within which much of the more historical and practical work has been contextualised. The texts provided by these women in particular have been widely acknowledged to form an alternative canon for scholars and practitioners of Gender and Performance. I have augmented that alternative canon with key texts and new applications of social semiotics and filmic theory. These texts are all sited in the main body of the text, in what I have approached as a site-specific application of theory to practice.

Chapter 2 details the results of this Literature Survey in detail. Here I simply wish to signal and tease out the notion that any literary analysis, or application of theory to practice, will in the context of this thesis be iterative, developed in a range of linked but distinct disciplinary sites, and applied in the moment of making as "site specific" in terms of both theatrical or mediated event, and of textual criticism.

The Method

The term "method" in the theatre world carries connotations of method acting. Its application in an academic context, in an alternative feminist reframing of the role of theatre in gender representations on stage, off site and in everyday life, is from the start contradictory to that standard application of the term. This displacement of the languages of performance is part and parcel of this study.

As I argue throughout this thesis that a number of related but distinct fields and approaches (to feminism, to theatre, to frame analysis) must be brought into dialogue in the process of making theatre as well as in the process of creating written and multimedia documents informed by these practices, so too do I argue in these pages for the need to create a new method for practice-based research that recognises the time, place and frame of the author and maker, over time, and in newly situated perspectives. I have therefore presented my methodology as a process coming into being with the work.

I have engaged with a number of methodological approaches to the analysis of practical work in this thesis, each selected for its direct relevance to the material emerging through

creative process, and over time. Rather than summarise one methodology at the outset, I have therefore integrated discussion of the evolution of a new method – building upon feminist theory as applied retrospectively to the ideas of Brecht and Stanislavski, and then forward onto the work of 1980s and 1990s and contemporary women theatre makers, and then again in a semiotic frame-analysis, and finally in my own offering of an original dramaturgical toolkit, for use in future by scholars seeking a tried and tested method of approach for process-based research.

Chapter-by-chapter summary

In Chapter 1, "Breaking out of the Proscenium Arch", I discuss my training as a theatre director specialising in script development and the unique process of directing new writing (first productions of new plays) under the mentorship of Max Stafford-Clark, who "played the role" of Artistic Director at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, from 1979-1993. The unique experience of working alongside Stafford-Clark in one of England's most famous and also most controversial theatres provides a rich resource of first hand experience and access to written and video and image documents, all integrated into the research and analysis of this chapter.

In Chapter 2, I develop the brief discussion of the Introduction to take my literature survey off site, or into the specific contexts of theatre, media and social semiotic analyses. Here, I discuss these texts in detail and demonstrate the iterative, transdisciplinary process that underpins my methodology in process, building up from the basis (discussed in Chapter 1) of the practice-based experience of the gendered and

politicised process of theatre making, gained in my years at the Royal Court. Here, I first outline the feminist and theatrical categories that are developed in the following chapters.

In Chapter 3, my detailed analysis of plays by April de Angelis and Caryl Churchill provides space for discussion and comparison of specific aspects of two major critical approaches to performance theory: those offered by Bertolt Brecht and by Elin Diamond (in her 1990s reworking of Brecht for application to the field of Gender and Performance). These first analyses of plays by women playwrights whose work I engaged with in process as well as in textual "product" set the scene for my subsequent building of a new framework for process-based analysis and positioned reading; and here, the term "reading" applies to the reading of images extracted from performance, as well as text: as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 4, I share the work involved in making *Di's Midsummer Night Party, 2000* and offer a detailed discussion of the subsequent short film version. In describing the decisions made in the making of both versions, I attempt to provide the reader (and viewer) with an insight into the process that might inform her or his approach to the experiment of "recontextualising" (made possible by the ViewHear interactive technology toolkit included on the DVD-Rom).

Chapter 5 provides a literary survey of selected writings from social semiotics, where the process of "recontextualisation" (Van Leeuwen 2001, 1999, 1986) is defined in a more precise sense, and where the concept of "strip analysis" (Goffman,1986) is first

presented and then re-presented in practical examples, presented to the reader as small cross-sections of the larger case studies discussed. To this end, I have designed and presented a dramaturgical toolkit, or a set of dramaturgical categories that can be used to facilitate the analysis of live performance in both ephemeral and mediated/archivable formats: the focus or main presentational framework of the next chapter.

Chapter 6 focuses on the results of this practice-based research project. Here, I offer as my most original and substantial contribution to the field, an orignal analysis utilising an original dramaturgical toolkit. I thereby build on the theories and practices discussed and applied throughout the study, and summarise with one major example: the "Analysis of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* Utilising an Original Set of Dramaturgical Categories". With this practical example set before the reader, I then discuss the details of my selected theatre practices and modes of analysis and textual/multimedia representation thereof, thereby both illustrating my main argument and simultaneously demonstrating the need to be precise and example-rich in discussion of performance and analytical framework. In the second section of this chapter, these dramaturgical categories are applied to the two main iterations of my own theatre work (the first live, and the second mediated) in order to analyse and argue for recognition of important and theatrically transformative instances of what I call "gender visibility".

In conclusion (Chapter 7) I argue that in the context of my own practice-based research, the process of "recontextualisation" can be usefully schematised and then applied by future practitioners and scholars, as this plotting of process provides a tool for the reading

of theatrical sign systems – including gender visibility – in live and mediated performance.

Chapter 1

Breaking Out of the Proscenium Arch

Having directed mainstream building-based theatre, fringe theatre[1] and regional theatre in the UK, my range of performance experience has been and continues to be unconventional. This chapter investigates the material and psychological conditions that make the process and reality of gender visibility difficult for women artists. In these pages I enlist a series of strategies for theatre making in order to find ways to investigate the potential of gender visibility in practical feminist work. By "recontextualising" my work from the proscenium-arch style conventional in Western theatres to site-based locations the director is enabled to present outside the context of mainstream theatre buildings. To this end, my performance work is analysed to assess how these recontextualisations encourage gender visibility.

I discuss my experience in the theatre industry, of the ways in which it has shaped my practice as a theatre director. The different theatre contexts in which I have worked from street theatre (Sensible Footwear, 1981-1983) to regional theatre (1990-1995) to "mainstream alternative" and as an assistant to Max Stafford Clark (1989-1990) have

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[1] I was a founding member of Sensible Footwear Theatre Company (1980 -); and was Artistic Director for companies including ReSisters (1988-1989); as well as being a Trainee Director at the Royal Court (1989-1990) and Director for numerous regional theatres and London venues (1990-1994). I have served as Artistic Director of Fragments and Monuments since co-founding that company in 1997.

taught me how dominant social conventions are supported and maintained through the system of mainstream theatre production. Smaller companies, for instance ReSisters or Fragments and Monuments, can resist conventional gender roles, but too often this political decision is made at the expense of other measures of success in commercial and popular terms (including media attention and promotion). Recently (2001) I projected large images of my filmed live performance onto the front of a public building. This process of exteriorisation offered the chance to show my work to a new audience and in relationship to a building that represents a specific set of social behaviours. This process of recontextualisation has led me from script-based performance staged in the conventional proscenium-arch theatre to site-based performance, and onto the projection of the film of the site-based performance, to what I now consider to be a 'progressive exteriorisation'.

The concept of gender visibility encompasses the relationship of the female director to her work, to personalise the example I see my experience of gender explicitly defined through my choice of theatre practice as evidenced in the choices I have taken in the use of theatre resources to make theatre. I clarify and define my theatre practice through this thesis, and propose some dramaturgical categories that I argue increase the gender visibility of live and mediated performance and can be applied by artists, practitioners, theatre directors and students to their work in order to promote the making of theatre as a process of discovering gender visibility.

After working at the Royal Court, I completed an MA in Independent Film and Video

(London College of Printing), as part of a professional journey and planned to find ways to understand how the existing body of knowledge and theories of the gaze could help me to find strategies to support the representation of gender in live performance and by extension live and mediated performance. Laura Mulvey's theories were embraced to help tackle the problems of spectatorship and gender in live performance, yet as Sue-Ellen Case observed nearly a decade ago (in 1995, published in 1996), the technology of cinema was more or less ignored in these debates.

Where then to place these discourses now, in the early years of what is after all a new century, when so much has changed in terms of theatre structures (architectural as well as political and economic) that the place of the screen is often within what used to be space reserved for live performance? How to apply 'gaze theory' in a topical and useful manner, remembering its roots in and major relevance to cinema and mediatised representations, and taking what is applicable to live interactions, and to contemporary performance dynamics, with their unique positioning of audience members in real time and space, viewable by as well as viewing the action in the frame of 'the gaze' as originally framed by Mulvey? Of course Mulvey herself and many critics since have re-contextualised those early debates. Jill Dolan, Lizbeth Goodman and others have explored the extra-scenic dynamics of the gaze in theatre and in women's theatre in particular.

Here, at the outset of this study, I wish to pose a different question based on a different problem: i.e. in this practice-based study, the discourse on representation which I needed

to help me frame my thoughts was not to be found in the Royal Court Theatre, London 1989-1990 even in the weekly script meetings held in the artistic director's office. I wondered therefore how the theory of the dominant gaze – so prominent in critical and also popular discussions of gender in the cinema (see Mulvey 1989, De Lauretis 1984, 1987, 1993, Doanne 1991) – could be transposed to my experience as a director of time-based performance, where the live body is present in the frame, and in the audience as well.

1.1 The female artist and the production of meaning: Psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches

The social and economic systems operating in the production of culture at large will, of course have a visible impact on the representation of women. The pervasive and dominant cultural industries (television, film, theatre, radio, advertising and newspapers) persist in creating and disseminating messages now made even more pervasive by the development of the worldwide web that support the culture of the dominant ideologies. This dominant presence controls the means of production and the result is a popular culture and a cultural heritage that excludes and manipulates the interests of "other" groups, including women. The system of meaning making is self-reflexive, defining and renewing itself through the production of meaning. Change can occur in a more fragile system of meaning, but in a robust system like cultural production, change is slow (Lemke 1984, pp 94-150).

In the context of a contemporary patriarchal and global culture in which social and economic dominance by any one group can always be seen in tension with, or as existing at the expense of, another, the positioning of women's theatrical and representational strategies is particularly problematic. It is therefore important to interrogate the implications this power relationship has on the production of theatre, inside and outside the theatre building. The female artist's work is framed by the patriarchal culture in which the theatre is located; this position implies a series of ideological frames through which the woman theatre makers' work can be seen. The political and ideological position held by the female theatre artist affects the conditions under which she makes work, and also affects the work produced.

This problematic relationship of women to the means of production is combined with a contested relationship to the structure and making of meaning through language. From Freud (d 1939) onwards, femininity has been positioned as "the other" to masculinity. Since Freud argued that language holds the symbolic meanings used to understand and create meaning in the world, his argument located women outside the symbolic order. The symbolic order in the Freudian discourse is represented through language, and since language is a privileged form of mediation, the exclusion of female subjectivity (as argued by Freud) is fundamental to the role of the woman artist in society and culture. Because of these social and cultural structures the female artist is positioned in a special relationship to the making of her work and its reception.

Theories of subjectivity based in and drawn from psychoanalytic discourse have provided

a rich field for the exploration and investigation of the construction of identity and subjectivity (Mitchell, 1974). Because the female subject is understood by Freud not to enter the symbolic language codes making up the linguistic coding of masculinity, a woman loses access to her symbolic identity. According to Freud, the girl child looks with envy at the father and recognises her lack of a penis, the indicator of her symbolic lack in the dominant linguistic discourse. Lacan responded to Freud by suggesting that the mirror stage is the site where identity is constructed: the male child sees that the mother does not bear a phallus and is frightened, moving onto the father as the source of identification. This move creates subjectivity and a place for the male child in the dominant masculine discourse. The girl child, however, looks at the father and sees that the mother does not possess a penis, resulting in her identification with her mother in a position of lack and sameness, blocking her entrance to her own identity or subjectivity.

The Oedipal experience, as discussed by Mitchell, is central to the process of building a masculine identity. The boy fantasises that he can murder his father and have sexual intercourse with his mother, thus creating a robust male identity. The process of separation and identity formation is different for girls and therefore once again, it is argued that the young girl forms a passive relationship to men and a loss of identity because of her weak role in the symbolic realm of meanings. This symbolic realm of meaning is acted out through language, a key site where gender roles are constructed and maintained (Butler 1990a, 1990b, 1993 and 1997).

In her 1975 article "Visual and other pleasures" Laura Mulvey drew on the field of

psychoanalytic criticism – now a well known approach but then still an original angle, especially as applied to the representation of women vis-à-vis the perception of women's position within a (screenic) frame. Mulvey called attention to the dominant gaze as male, or as positioned along with the general male perspective. She has of course since revised and updated her argument, spurred along by counter-arguments and engaging discourses ignited by other critics – Teresa de Lauretis (1984, 1987) among others. Cinematic theories of the gaze draw on psychoanalysis, and for Mulvey the male spectator projects his dreams onto the screen and they are played out through the male protagonist. In "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' ", Mulvey argues that the female spectator takes on the role of the male spectator in order to experience pleasure from the film narrative – in a sense masquerading, but according to Mulvey (1989, p 33): "this Nature does not sit easily and shifts restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes". The instability of female subjectivity is emphasised by Mulvey through psychoanalysis, whereas for Butler, writing in the following decade, the social context of language is the site of difference. Butler is less worried about the instability of female subjectivity and argues for the celebration of gender difference in the context of an uneven distribution of power in social relations.

1.2 Women and the theatre: The institutional experience

The history of women's participation in the theatre affects the subjective and objective role that women play in this institution. Mitchell teases out the different relationship women have to society through gender relations, which, although linked to class conflict,

is not the same as the experience of men:

> The controlled exchange of women that defines human culture is reproduced in the patriarchal ideology of every form of society. It goes alongside and is interlinked with class conflict, but it is not the same thing. It is not only in the ideology of their roles as mothers and procreators but above all in the very psychology of femininity that women bear witness to the patriarchal definition of human society.
>
> (Mitchell, 1974, p 413)

Her emphasis on how the psychological dimension of femininity is constructed though patriarchy in such a way that women "bear witness to the patriarchal definition of human society" demonstrates the importance of psychological structures and how they are maintained through social processes. It is through this experience as a "witness" that the psychology of femininity/the psychology of women bolsters and supports the maintenance of patriarchy. The psychology of human behaviour is the core material that the theatre deals with, and Mitchell's observation regarding the construction of female psychology indicates the importance of the ongoing power and control relationships on and off the stage.

Mitchell argues that filial inheritance from father to son, supported by the Freudian construct of the Oedipal complex, results in the construction and reproduction of patriarchal systems. The domination by a male hierarchy of theatre directors provides a micro example of how patriarchy renews itself, resisting change.

Mitchell describes the universal aspects of patriarchy, which are set in motion by "the death of the father", resulting in the *exchange of women*. This exchange mechanism pushes women's value in the "market" down because the masculine subject is constructed to enact a filial right. This right reinforces the universal aspects of patriarchy at the same

time as it devalues the female subject:

> Patriarchy describes the universal culture – however, each specific economic mode of production must express this in different ideological forms.
>
> (Ibid, p 409)

In the theatre, patriarchal culture penetrates and maintains the ideological mechanisms that operate in decision making processes. These processes are led for the most part by men, who historically[2] have a sustained history of commonality, for example school and university attendance. On top of this hegemony lie the specific problems that the female artist experiences as patriarchy refuses to endorse her as a subject and author of her own work. In fine art practice, her role in patriarchal artistic discourse as a model, where she is the object of the male artist's gaze subjugates her. The reversal of her role to become the artist challenges the conventional frames of artistic production. This challenge in itself produces a different relationship to the means of production for the female artist, impacting on the work she produces and its reception.

In response to the squeezing out of the women's case by the dominant class[3] discourse, during the 1970s and 1980s, theatre companies led by women for women helped to create a space where the women's agenda could be developed and heard. This gap led women to set up their own theatre companies: Monstrous Regiment (Hanna, 1991), Mrs Worthington's Daughters, The Women's Theatre Group[4], Sensible Footwear, ReSisters),

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2 The increase of female students in higher education will impact on this pattern

3 The absence of the women's agenda is apparent in left-wing fringe theatre groups (Belt and Braces, Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre, CAST) and mainstream theatre (Royal Court and National Theatre)

4 Sphinx Theatre Company came into being in 1973, following a successful season of women's theatre organised by Ed Berman and held at the Almost Free theatre in London's Leicester Square. The popularity of the season led to the formation of two theatre companies: the short-lived Women's Theatre Company and the Women's Theatre Group. The latter was to become Sphinx Theatre Company in 1991. See the full history of the company in Goodman (1993).

et al. In these companies, women's perspectives, experiences and stories, as well as their distinctive ways of sharing these, were given full space for expression. In these spaces then, women took control of their forms of expression as well as of their own means of production. The experience of women as active agents in their own lives and in the larger cultural context of the theatre was the starting point for this work. The emphasis on sexuality and identity locates the work in the maxim "the personal is political". The aesthetics are shaped and driven by women's many and diverse experiences, and are framed and placed deliberately centre stage, with an emphasis on the possibilities of the relationship between performer and audience (Goodman, 1993). The reception of the work is judged by after-show discussions, where audience feedback is shared with the company: a sharing of the last stage of the process which involves the audience and makers together in a shared ownership of the moment, the event, the shared experience.

Women controlling their own production of theatre have a greater control over their production of meaning making, and subvert conventional modes through which meaning is constructed and maintained. The question of women's experience was marginalised in favour of the class imperative: "after the revolution" the women's case would be dealt with. For socialist feminists this amounted to false consciousness and a mechanism to promote male power and leadership in left-wing organisations.

1.3 Equal opportunities and socialism/women's liberation from 1969

> Equal Pay, Equal Education and Opportunity, 24-hour Nurseries, Free Contraception and Abortion on Demand
>
> (Wandor 1972, p 2)

The demands made by the Women's Liberation Movement at its first conference, held at Oxford University in 1969, show the changes that would result in a political system that delivered equality of opportunity for women as well as men. Their socialist belief that collective organisation and a will to share resources would achieve "equality of opportunity" was based on equal access to education and welfare services and investment in the social infrastructure. This socialist agenda promised advancement by merit rather than class. However, the ongoing class debate excluded issues of gender, creating the conditions for a left wing in Great Britain that ignored women's oppression.

Catherine Itzin, in her survey of political theatre in Britain after 1968 (1980), argued that between 1968 and 1978 theatre workers tried to make Marxism a practical reality through their work in the theatre. As a socialist option was unavailable from the main political parties in Great Britain, alternative and fringe theatre sought to raise the consciousness of the working class through their activities. The diversity of these projects – from Ed Berman's Inter-Action to Broadside Mobile Workers' Theatre Company to Joan Littlewood's Fun Palace – was significant. Alternative and fringe performance took place outside theatres, at public demonstration, in pubs and in community centres.

Berman, an American maverick and director of Inter-Action,[5] ran a large north London community centre as a hierarchy, with small self-sufficient satellite collectives engaged in a range of enterprises from printing to theatre. His unashamed zest for enterprise was apparent at a time when the profit-motive was defined as part of the capitalist agenda by the socialist/Marxist groups. The American influence was strong, through expatriates Susie Orbach (*Fat is a Feminist Issue*, 1977) and Berman himself, who refocused the emphasis on the individual. By the mid-1980s, a radical conservative agenda under Margaret Thatcher (prime minister 1979-1990) pushed the collective equal opportunities agenda out in favour of an individualistic anti-community alternative. Notorious for her determination to perpetuate the male-dominated hierarchy of her party, Great Britain's first female prime minister proved to be a negative role model, discouraging women from involvement in politics to such an extent that the achievements made by women were further subjugated.

The political activism sparked by student and public demonstration in 1968 politicised a new generation of young people and also paved the way for a new group of playwrights to emerge: John Arden, Edward Bond, Arnold Wesker, David Mercer, Trevor Griffiths (Ibid). The grand narrative of class oppression pervades this work and signals the preoccupation by privileged middle-class educated men with the working class position, maintaining a hierarchy that gives preference to class over gender and race.

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5 Sensible Footwear was set up with support from Inter-Action in the form of rehearsal space, photocopying, etc

1.4 The Royal Court Theatre, London

The Royal Court has been the home of new writing since 1956, when the English Stage Company presented its first production. In 1989 I joined the Royal Court as a trainee director[6] under Max Stafford-Clark[7] (artistic director of the Royal Court 1979-1993). By working closely with Stafford-Clark – as an assistant director and later as a lecturer, when he was visiting professor at the University of Hertfordshire (1998-2001) – I learnt about one of the arts of developing[8] and directing new plays for the theatre. Stafford-Clark approaches the development of new writing by applying actors and their capacity to research as a main resource. By encouraging the writer to work in the rehearsal the shape of the play can be fine tuned, again by drawing on the intuitive sense of the actors to search out parts of the script that are not working.

I had seen productions of *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls* and *Ice Cream* (all by Caryl Churchill and directed by Stafford-Clark); as a director running a theatre company that produced new work written, directed and performed by women, I was surprised that Churchill agreed to Stafford-Clark directing her work. When I raised this in the bar after the first performance of *Ice Cream,* I elicited quizzical looks and realised that the social and political agenda at the Royal Court was different to the one that I had been used to.

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6 Taking up the Gerald Chapman Trainee Director Award. I was the first award winner, in 1989/90, based at the Royal Court Theatre and Leicester Haymarket

7 The London *Evening Standard* Life Time Achievement Award Winner 2003

8 The tradition of nurturing and developing new playwriting has been developed at the Royal Court Theatre through George Devine, Bill Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark, for the English Stage Company

Sarah Daniels has said that she will only work with women directors as she feels that women should help to create opportunities for other women working in the theatre:

> BUT more importantly it is about trust – with their track record would you trust a man to direct a feminist play?
>
> (Daniels 1984, pp 23-24)

As I began my career at the Royal Court I realised that the director training programme was not properly in place and I was not ready for the complex political agenda that the Court is known for – an example being the maintenance of male successors in the artistic and management hierarchy. In my article published in the anthology *Seven Plays by Women* on women as trainee directors ("Director Training for Women" in Robson 1990, p38), I argued that "the ad hoc nature of director training means male assumptions are bound to prevail". I suggested the following approach to redress the balance as it was in 1990:

> For director training to work the trainee needs a negotiated approach to her training, good role models and feedback offered to her about the training process. A method can help the trainee to take an active role and not to be put in the passive position of accepting whatever is on offer.
>
> (Ibid)

In the absence of an explicit code of practice I looked for clues to suggest how a woman director could operate under the patriarchal conditions I found at the Royal Court. In assisting Nancy Diuguid and Jenny Killick, their insistence that I should have hands-on training – both believing that directing is a pragmatic occupation – revealed ways of working on which I have built since. For *The Wall-Dog* (Karge, 1990), directed by Nancy Diuguid, I rehearsed the actors on the main stage at the Royal Court, giving firsthand experience of running a rehearsal. I assisted Jenny Killick at Leicester Haymarket and was responsible for rehearsing a large company on a revolving stage.

This combination of technical and performance challenges demonstrated that theatre is a practical medium. Killick had emphasised this, and suggested that sitting in the same seat to watch the technical rehearsal and dress rehearsal helps the director to establish sight-lines. These hands-on experiences felt like real training where I could practice being a theatre director in a safe context and receive constructive feedback. As an assistant to Max Stafford-Clark and Simon Curtis I was expected to "watch and learn" in rehearsal and work outside the rehearsal room with the writers. The writers included Ian Dury on *Apples* (1989) and Clare McIntyre on *My Heart's a Suitcase* (1990), where scripts were proof-read and published by the opening night. This experience taught me how to manage the process of script development, important to the process of devising new work.

In the weekly script meetings where the quality of new scripts sent to the literary manager was debated I experienced the power of institutional discourse and the frustration of the outsider trying to make herself understood. Stafford-Clark and Mel Kenyon[9] found De Angelis's work "too visceral", and since this was one of the qualities of her writing that I most admired, any common ground on what made a "good script" was limited.

The Royal Court continues to marginalise women's experience, the present artistic director, Ian Rickson, maintains the status quo in his programme and his staffing, indicating the degree to which this institution has been left untouched by feminism and anti-racism into the new millennium. Polly Teale (Rickson's partner) writes, directs and

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9 Literary manager of the Royal Court 1989-1993, now a literary agent at Casarotto Ramsay & Associates

produces work for the touring company Shared Experience, where she is the associate director to Nancy Meckler. Their programme is increasingly successful, recently filling the Lyric Hammersmith in London with *After Mrs Rochester*, written by Teale in response to the Jean Rhys novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Shared Experience produces adaptations of classic fiction, which is not the same as new writing for the theatre. Their work does not in the end provide more production space for new writing by women playwrights as an alternative to the male-dominated Royal Court programme. Shared Experience provides a touring programme that emphasises women's experience through the heritage project of reviving the classics.

The progress I had made as a director and as a woman artist was marginalised by the prevailing culture at the Royal Court. Young Oxbridge male graduates had held the role of assistant director in the past; my position as a double award-winner[10] and assistant director (female, 33 years old and a mother of a four-year-old) broke the mould.

1.4.1 New Play? Take it to the Max[11]

Max Stafford-Clark has developed a method of rehearsal and script development that has influenced my work greatly. As the testimonies from actors involved in the script

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10 *Ironmistress* by April de Angelis for ReSisters had just been completed, receiving excellent notices and a *Time Out* Award nomination.

11 from the *Wednesday Review*, *The Independent*, 22 September 1999: "Max Stafford-Clark is on a roll. His production of *Drummers* is a hit and he's about to open *Some Explicit Polaroids*, the new one from Mark Ravenhill, author of *Shopping and Fucking*. What makes him the new play guru?"

development of *Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill (Ritchie, 1987) show, Stafford-Clark encourages actors to investigate the details of their characters' lives rigorously: "I call on actors to investigate their characters like journalists" (Stafford-Clark 1989, p37). His approach results in a detailed performance that is firmly rooted in the cultural conventions current at a particular time.

Stafford-Clark's view on the state of playwriting by women suggests that social and cultural influences continue to impact on the female playwright:

> I think that during the decade that I was at the Royal Court, which is basically the 80s, feminism was the dominant political influence and in a decade dominated by Thatcher, feminism and its effects were interesting. In many ways women's lives were changing more sharply than men's were, and what theatre does is record those events, so it's probably no accident that a number of interesting plays were written by women. But again it still didn't get to 50%, that's what is interesting; it still remained at 38%.
>
> (Carvalho, 1998, p38)

According to Stafford-Clark, even when the social and political conditions seem to be favourable, output by women playwrights remains below 50% of the total.

> I suppose what women brought was a broader perspective of history. *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1978), one of Caryl Churchill's early plays, examines a historical movement through the eyes of many people and I think there is usually a reluctance to see events through the eyes of one person, and that challenge seems to be refreshing and structurally and stylistically new. Timberlake Wertenbaker's plays are also sometimes criticised for lacking a narrative line, for lacking a principal character. And sometimes those criticisms are also a critic's limitation to come to grips with a new form, which is a strength as well as a weakness.
>
> (Ibid)

Churchill has challenged the dominant approach to history, where a single perspective on a historical incident was considered sufficient. By showing the historical incidents in her plays from a number of perspectives, she challenges this logocentric view. The

unpinning of a distinct narrative that is recognisable in Wertenbaker's[12] writing also challenges the position of the dominant single narrative.

Max Stafford-Clark had become accustomed to having the writer in rehearsal through workshops for Joint Stock in the mid-1970s. Gaskill, a generation older than Stafford-Clark, had seen the Berliner Ensemble and bought a political acuity to Stafford-Clark's work, evident in the production of *Fanshen*[13] by David Hare, directed by both men. Stafford-Clark developed this ensemble work into script development when he became artistic director of the Royal Court in 1979. His development of new plays made them more robust and marketable. This product development helped writers to develop their work, and also helped the Royal Court Theatre to survive as the theatre of new writing.

Stafford-Clark commissions work by writers for his present company Out of Joint, as he did for the Royal Court Theatre. The process of commissioning demonstrates the director's preferences and indicates the voice of the director. Stafford-Clark continues to be interested in class and identity (as illustrated by *Duck*, Feehily, 2003) and combining a historical play with a new commission, as he did recently with *A Laughing Matter* (De Angelis, 2002) and *She Stoops to Conquer*.

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[12] See Appendix G for CV

[13] First performed in London by Joint Stock Theatre Group at the ICA Terrace Theatre on 22 April 1975, directed by William Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark. Hare and Stafford-Clark collaborated again at the National Theatre in *The Permanent Way*, 2003-2004 (www.outofjoint.co.uk)

1.4.2 Gaskill and Brecht: From the Berliner Ensemble to *Fanshen*

Gaskill (artistic director of the Royal Court, 1965-1975) discovered that the conditions to produce political work of quality were not available at the Royal Court or the National Theatre. After seeing the Berliner Ensemble in 1956, Gaskill reports:

> We thought, "That's what theatre should be like," not because it was political, but because it had excited us, really deeply, and moved us and involved us… Serious theatre, a large-scale company, subsidised theatre and a group of people working as a permanent ensemble – that image of what theatre could and should be dominated many of our lives for a long time.[14]

The Berliner Ensemble provided a model of a theatre company whose work straddled politics and theatre in both the form and content of the work. As Gaskill acknowledges, the scenography and dramaturgy of the work was as political as the written text.

> The process, I think, brought us nearer to making a political statement – in the way that the play was acted and directed and designed, not just in what it was saying, but in the way our techniques were being used. I discovered that there is a politics in the way you place people on the stage, there is a politics in the way you light people on the stage, in the way the actors act, in the way you design your plays.
>
> (Ibid)

Gaskill and Stafford-Clark directed *Fanshen* by David Hare, from the book by William Hinton, about the Chinese revolution. The process of rehearsing and producing *Fanshen* had an impact on the political view of the members of the company and on the aesthetics of the work. Gaskill notes: "The aesthetic clarity came as a consequence of getting the political line" (ibid, p 221). The Chinese peasants in the play take a political journey from feudal ignorance to political consciousness, or *fanshen*. In their rehearsals Gaskill,

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[14] From an unpublished lecture given by William Gaskill at King's College, Cambridge, at a conference on political theatre in April 1978 that I attended as a student; found in Itzin 1980, p 223

Stafford-Clark and the company examined themselves, as "class animals", and the play on a weekly basis. This "sifting" of the point of the play and their relationship to the play was for Gaskill a very satisfying working method, which "had a tremendous effect on the finished product".

The conditions under which *Fanshen* was produced demonstrate that working outside the mainstream can clarify the political intent of work produced. In this production the responsibility for power and control between the actor and the text was blurred to create a context for decision making that mirrored the political agenda of the play. All voices should be heard in order to reach a decision reflecting the views of the collective. The directors (Gaskill and Stafford-Clark) created the conditions for this non-hierarchical process to occur through their alternative company Joint Stock. In this fragile new company, the flexibility to operate in unconventional ways was discovered. These discoveries left traces imprinted on the production, enhancing its political value, raising the consciousness of the audience and company alike.[15]

Political energy is palpable in the reports of the making of *Fanshen* (as was the case in the making of *Cloud Nine* – see Ritchie, 1987), demonstrating the power of theatrical discourse in the theatre company, on stage and in relationship to an audience reception. The dissemination of these meanings to the culture outside the company was successful because a match was found between the company's agenda and its audience. The theme of class is dominant in *Fanshen,* demonstrating once again how the media takes up class

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[15] As designer for *Fanshen*, directed by Roger Michel, at the 1979 Edinburgh festival, I witnessed the consciousness-raising power of this play on audience and company.

issues, while gender and race issues might be more difficult to promote.

In his article "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill and the Practice of Political Theatre" (1978), Peter Holland argued that Brecht would have recognised the features (such as an ensemble company acting multiple roles) of Littlewood's 1955 production of *Mother Courage* as Brechtian[16]:

> Brecht would have recognised the practice as a desirable dislocation of the practices of the theatre, a demonstration of the *status* of the play as performance, as *representation* and hence as an *alienable* structure. Most important of all, the device draws attention to the structure of the play, isolating each scene and indicating its limits to the audience. This emphasis on the scene as a discrete unit becomes crucial in Edward Bond's work.
>
> (Holland, 1978, p 24; emphasis mine)

It is interesting to note that Holland describes *Mother Courage* with the words *representation* and *status* alongside the concept of *alienation*. His analysis foregrounds key concepts pertaining to this study, as I work through how the process of representation in performance can be alienated to investigate and point up the status of gender coding. His language is drawn from the sign-based analysis of semiotics, where the decoding process is used to analyse the status and values of the messages being communicated.

1. 5 Reflect or Change? That is the question!

Stafford-Clark aimed to "reflect" society through his work (see Appendix A) – a description that belies responsibility for his personal frame of reference, the frames he

looks through at the world, compounded by his productions framed by the proscenium arch. The status of the ideological, the processes of representation that Stafford-Clark is engaged in, remain inexplicit. In *Some Explicit Polaroids* by Mark Ravenhill, produced in a proscenium-arch theatre such as the Royal Court, the signs are read by the audience in the cultural context of this particular theatre, which includes the history of the theatre and its social and political legacy. Nadia, the female protagonist in Ravenhill's play, remains a victim despite her fighting talk, because her costume and stage presence continue to signify low status in the context of the patriarchal theatre hierarchy represented by the proscenium-arch staging.

Reflecting the world through mimesis helps to consolidate and perpetuate the status quo, through the capacity of realism to "mystify the process of theatrical signification" (Diamond, 1991, p 4). In her attempt to unmake mimesis (1997), Diamond stresses that the performance text framed by the proscenium arch creates a set of meanings that reflect the history of theatre and are especially relevant for this study of the history of women in the theatre.

> With Brechtian hindsight we know that realism, more than any other form of theatre representation, mystifies the process of theatrical signification. Because it naturalises the relation between character and actor, setting and world, realism operates in concert with ideology and because it depends on, insists on stability of reference, an objective world as the source and guarantor of knowledge, realism surreptitiously reinforces (even if it agues with) the arrangements of that world.
>
> (Diamond 1991, p 4)

Diamond emphasises that "arrangement" is a crucial concept in sustaining realism,

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16 Kenneth Tynan complained: "[Littlewood].has made a vice of economy by allowing the actors to change the scenery in full view of the audience, advice at which Brecht would boggle."

because meanings and ideology are constructed and supported in this way:

> The picture-frame or proscenium arch (which still dominates theatre design) reinforces the pleasures of perspectival space, in which each object has a measured and appropriate position within the whole – a "whole" produced by a "single and immobile eye (I)" positioned to see/know the relations between the meanings of the objects in view.
>
> (Ibid, p 5)

The changing of the "arrangements" or recontextualisation of the arrangement offered as a strategy to breathe new life into gendered readings, in both live and mediated performance.

1.6 Representation, Power and Ideology: Bringing race, gender and sexuality into the frame

Stuart Hall was one of the founders of the field now known as Media Studies, and remains a key player in the cultural study of representation, with particular reference to the intersecting areas of race, class and gender. In his formative years at the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies, and then at the Sociology Department of the Open University into the 1990s and early years of the new century, his work set in motion a new way of thinking about representation, with repercussions across many fields and many cultures. Hall's emphasis on the important role of culture and artistic practice differentiated the centre's contribution from the more structural, mechanistic approaches of the previous Marxist debates on culture and ideology.

For Hall (1993, 1997, 2003), the production process is central to the signification of power in the process of representation. The field of Cultural Studies, of which Hall is a

founder, interrogates a variety of cultural productions and products, ranging from TV, film and radio to photography and beyond. The focus on the production process by cultural theorists helps in the analysis of how gendered codes (encoded in the production process and decoded by the spectator) instantiate themselves in live and mediated performance.

From the mid-1970s on, Hall explored the ideological biases of culture, and demonstrated the ways in which what may appear to be cultural "norms" of representation and communication can be explored and represented. He showed how messages are produced and received, particularly in the contemporary mass media and popular culture, in order to argue for the need for conscious critical investigation of the positioning of people in cultures vis-à-vis their identifying categories (race, class and gender). So for Hall, and for the generations he has influenced with his unique take on Culture as not only constructed but as deliberately presented and re-presentable, "identity" came to be understood as polysemic and unfixed. The concept of identity as a single dominant characteristic was in time superseded by a general awareness for the recognition of multiple identities, and for the possibility that any one identity would develop and change with time. Thus "identity politics" were born, and have since made a major impact on the fields of Gender Studies and all fields where the representation of bodies is prevalent (including film, print media, photography and of course, theatre).

Identity is the keyword (to borrow the phrase from Hall's contemporary, the late Raymond Williams) for what we might think of Representation Studies' in Cultural,

Social and Performance disciplines. In the process of research for this dissertation, I made a small project of surveying Hall's work on identity, focussing on defining the relationship of "representation" to ideological practices. From the large body of Hall's work (he is a prolific writer as well as a critical thinker of importance in the fields of Critical Theory, Media Studies and Cultural Representation), I select the readings that reflect his role in developing the theoretical framework around the practice of representation and its particular importance to artistic practice. I discuss the process of encoding and decoding and the role of the artist as the creator of unconventional representations in a variety of media.

In his article "Encoding, Decoding" (1993), Hall argued that there can be no meaning without consumption; in other words, he argued that the process of encoding cultural artefacts is as important as the process of decoding. Decoding describes the process of reception, whereby the reader/spectator or consumer of the text deconstructs the meaning from her/his own point of view. The meaning is mediated through the reader's subjectivity. Hall argues that although this process is very important, the messages have also been encoded in the production process. Hall coined the phrase "complex structure of dominance" (ibid, p 91) to describe the process whereby messages are imprinted by institutional power relations:

> …. production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction. This would be to think of the process as a "complex structure in dominance", sustained through the articulation of connected practices, each of which, however, retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own form and conditions of existence.
>
> (Ibid)

Hall emphasised the discursive character of circulation and how this linguistic construction is created and maintained through discourses of various kinds and levels of dominance:

> The operation of naturalised codes reveals not the transparency and "naturalness" of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use. They produce apparently "natural" recognitions. This has the (ideological) effect of concealing the practices of coding which are present.
>
> (Ibid, p 95)

The concealing of code is central to my study as I explore how naturalised gender codes can be revealed and investigated by applying theatre practices. The process of representation is defined by Hall as a process whereby power (representations of different interests and different scales of value) are manifested.

In an example from the moment in the 1980s where the development of Black photography influenced me and was itself influenced by film, performing and visual arts, Hall argues for the process of photography (Bailey & Hall, 2003) as a mode of radical representation. Documentary genres such as photography were the site of a shift in the context of questions around claims to objective truth in this genre, and "the growing critique of the classic realist text" (p 380). The move towards the decentred subject, away from the more essentialist notions of subject, is also a part of this important cultural shift.

The decentred subject is central to the cultural studies project, and in the above cited article "The Vertigo of Displacement", which is typical of this approach, Hall explores this moment with Black photographer David A Bailey. The construction of identity

through popular culture and the media is foregrounded, in an attempt to redefine identity in the post-social democratic period. After the wall dividing east Berlin from west Berlin fell, the Marxist framework familiar to the left in Britain came under urgent revision. A cluster of Black artists flourished during this period and influenced my artistic process. Camp, pastiche and irony were some of the tools used in this work, and a desire to investigate the self and identity as evidenced in the work of Chila Burman, Ingrid Pollard, David A Bailey and Rotimi Fani-Kayode set off the still unfolding multidisciplinary art practices evidenced in these artists' portfolios.

As a theatre maker, community worker and artist, I was proud to take part in some of the same events in which Hall both engaged and later analysed.[17] In Hall's words, "the GLC created a platform for debate through conferences, seminars, workshops and publication" (p 381), and he further observed that: "…a number of black photographers began to explore questions of identification, the issue of how best to contest dominant regimes of representation and their institutionalisation, and the question of opening up fixed positions of spectatorship" (p. 384).

The project Hall called into being – that of creating and disseminating positive images of Black people during the 1980s (see http://www.autograph-abp.co.uk/gallery/bur.html), was mirrored by projects undertaken by many women artists of the era, working in cinema, fine art, photography and the theatre.

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17 On mobile women's centre Camden Women's Bus, working for Kate Allen (now director of Amnesty International, London) at Camden council, 1984-1987.

Against this, the 1980s produced a fresh body of criticism which said: yes. Mapplethorpe does fetishise, abstract, formalise, and appropriate the black body. But, on the other hand, we can see that Mapplethorpe is contesting the dominant representation of black masculinity in a lot of black photography – he lets loose his desire for the black male form which many black photographers suppress. So on the one hand Mapplethorpe is contesting a one-dimensional representation of black masculinity, while on the other expropriating the black male form in a fetishistic way. Both things are true.

(Hall, p 384)

The complexity of the representation process has been expressed and debated by many critics, with many notable examples. One of the most visible and audible debates was perhaps the public and critical discussion of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial approach to representing Black male models. Mapplethorpe's choice of subject is first criticised by Hall and Bailey- both themselves Black men, thereby implicated or simplistically reflected to some extent in this image. Hall and Bailey eventually conceded that Mapplethorpe was, as an artist, both engaging with a field of representation in need of re-presentation (Black men as subjects and not only as objects of the gaze) and was also, it could be argued, offering a critical engagement with this subject, thereby expanding the representation of the Black male body through his pictures, and at the same time, constructing the conventional, power-based approach of the fetishistic male gaze onto the less powerful subject in his work. The polysemic system of meanings apparent in Mapplethorpe's work shows how photography as a medium can be used as a tool for both exploring and challenging dominant gendered readings and cultural representations.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to "break out of the proscenium arch" in order to show how my journey producing and directing theatre performances has developed against a specific cultural and historical map. I have described both the autobiographical details of my successes and failures in the profession and my frustrations in the context of the production and consumption of theatre in London from 1980 to the present. By introducing the materialist information about theatre practice alongside my early reference to psychoanalytic approaches, I have begun to chart the relationship between the interior/psychological and exterior/public processes that characterises this thesis, to be formulated as "domestic/public use of space". The concepts of difference and "the other" emerge as features of this twenty five-year journey, where the complexities of identity boundaries are in the process of being remapped. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), describes culture as the effect of discriminatory practices, "the production of differentiation as signs of authority" (p 114), to change how culture is perceived – "its value and its rules of recognition". He goes on to develop his detailed discussion of hybridity:

> The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside.
>
> (Bhaba, 1994, p 116)

Releasing my work from the plethora of production constraints typical of work in proscenium arch-framed theatres (as outlined in this first chapter), has led me into a new territory: the map of the thesis and of my professional career of the past decade. My hard-won expertise as an expert in directing new writing, with an up-to-date knowledge of new

playwrights[18] has been reframed. Since 1996, my work has focussed on devising performances as a practice-based time-based and situated formulation of the role of the director. Reading texts and considering the perspectives of feminist performance theory as I have read, viewed and directed feminist plays offered a new multi-layered approach. The literary review offered in Chapter 2 surveys the broad field of my reading, as the first stage in building the theoretical framework for this practice-based thesis.

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18 As Jim Hiley wrote in *The Listener*, 1989, about my Gerald Chapman Trainee Director Award, "Anna has an encyclopaedic knowledge of new playwrights"

Chapter 2

Reading to See

> Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it – much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not the stolen goods. The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and "masquerade". My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.
>
> (Rivière, 1966, p 213)

The history of performing femininity on the Western stage – primarily by young men in the early years of theatre, leading up to the 1660's – offers a focal point for study by feminist performance theorists. Many such theorists and historians of women's roles on the stage have focused in the past two decades on the differences between gender representations as created by women, and as created by men. For instance, in *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997) as in her earlier work (1988), Elin Diamond argues that the ideological construction of gendered meanings through the gaze can be dismantled through theatre. She developed her re-reading of Brecht as a significant strategy to challenge the role of mimesis in consolidating and perpetuating the status quo. Sue-Ellen Case (1988, 1990, 1996), and Jill Dolan (1991, 1993) developed a new aesthetics of feminist performance based on lesbian desire, which other critics have since developed in the realm of performance art in mediated forms as well (Hill and Paris, Kuppers, et al).

Judith Butler (1997, 1993, 1990) has become a prominent voice in the debates about the construction of gendered identities. She takes a linguistic approach to argue fervently against heteronormativity as she sees its role as central to maintaining the dominance of the patriarchal discourse. The lesbian gaze challenges the dominant gaze and the role of heteronormativity in the construction of gendered meanings. Lizbeth Goodman (2000, 1996, 1993) writer and editor of many books on gender and the politics of performance emphasises the live versus mediated performance debate as a key factor in challenging dominant gendered codes. Lesley Ferris (1993, 1990) *Crossing the Stage* takes the feminist re-reading of the history of acting for the stage forward offering the cross-dressed body on stage as the site of multiple readings. In *Unmarked: The politics of performance*, Peggy Phelan (1993), demonstrates through her performative writing and her examples how "unmarked" readings challenge the dominant gaze.

I begin here by discussing the scope of my reading, which includes a contextual discussion to develop aspects of the debate on representation, including theories of the gendered gaze, spectatorship, and the role of the "active reader". I then tighten the focus to include some aspects of resistant theatre practice, including cross-dressing and the "resistant actress".

2.1.

2.2.

Figure 2.1. *Cloud Nine* (1979)
Figure 2.2. *Top Girls* (1982)

By "resistant actress" I refer to the cultural phenomenon of women resisting traditionally prescribed roles, both on stage and in the framework of performance theory. As women in the theatre were (and still, to some degree, are) historically excluded from the means of production of cultural representations, including the literary canon – where the preference given to male writers over female writers has been the source of much discussion – this resistance to the site of exclusion and repression is not surprising; it is rather an instance of rather predictable but nonetheless exciting personal/political activism. In Freudian approaches to psychoanalysis, women's identities are posited as "other" to male identity (as discussed in Chapter 1). Both the theoretical writing and film-making of Laura Mulvey have investigated the cinematic gaze, and have provided contextual support for the progress made by feminist theatre makers in investigating a female aesthetic to produce a new framework, defined through women's eyes. As a consequence of the social and economic position of the woman producer struggling to be heard above the dominant male voice, feminist theorist long sought a suitable representative voice with which to underpin their arguments and bolster their voices. In this effort, many found that a Marxist approach to a didactic theatre – as proposed and expounded by the playwright and director Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) – was most directly relevant and helpful in the effort to liberate women's voices as well.

In *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997), Diamond harnessed Brecht's contribution to theatre history and practice to feminist theories of the gaze, and discussed the structuring of the gaze in the cinema (a dominant mode of representation) and its affects on audience desire. She explored the complex and seductive aspects of the gaze, and the consequences for the female spectator who is positioned against her own conscious

will in the situated perspective of the male viewer.

My task in this research, written less than a decade later (but in such a turbulent and fast-developing decade in terms of both theatre practice and technological possibilities) is to explore Diamond's treatment of the gaze and to take that further by applying it to the actor and audience's intricate relationships in my own practice.

2.1 The Gaze

In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1989), Mulvey analysed the representation of gender in Hollywood cinema and described the "economy of looking" as male-dominated. It seems possible, in hindsight, that the female spectator, as Mulvey argued, can learn this kind of looking, allowing her to gain pleasure from the Hollywood cinema. Feminist writing on cinema since the 1970s (including key articles by Katherine Brundsden, Annette Kuhn, Teresa de Lauretis *et al*) provides a detailed and in-depth analysis about the ways that gender can be "read". When, in 1999, Mulvey argued that the male gaze was inscribed into the production of dominant cinema in such a way that the spectator – male or female – understands the cinematic experience through the male gaze, she made a landmark intervention into popular and academic understanding of the everyday readings of gender in culture. She wrote:

> The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.
>
> (Mulvey, 1989, p 62)

By emphasising the problem of the "phallic gaze", Mulvey effectively offered feminist theatre makers the challenge of re-orientating the spectator's view.

In *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997), Elin Diamond builds on Mulvey to argue that:

> Performance, we noted, operates in a visual field that historically and culturally has been dominated by the phallic gaze – that is, from infancy we are trained to look through the lens of sexual difference; parents, teachers, and especially the media reinforce the familiar binaries masculine-feminine, active-passive, penis-lack of penis.
>
> (Diamond 1997, p 159)

Defining the status of the gaze in relation to the male has been criticised by feminist writers concerned that Mulvey disavows the female gaze in all its possibilities. As De Lauretis argues, sexual difference needs to be deconstructed to expand notions of gender as having more complex definitions. She finds Foucault's theory of a "technology of sex" useful in her *Technologies of Gender* (1987), where the emphasis is on the construction and process of gender through social institutions of various kinds (media, schools, the family etc.) rather than on sexual difference. The construction of femininity in popular culture is problematic and destructive to gender relations, disempowering women through their excessive visibility. As Phelan notes:

> If representational visibility equals power, then almost naked young white women should be running Western culture.
>
> (Phelan, 1993, p 10)

2.2 Cross-dressing to challenge the hegemonic readings of acting

Given that women first performed (legally) on the Western stage in the 1660s, the imprint made by men playing women had a long time to make and leave its mark. It is therefore not too surprising that some vestiges of male-influenced performance

traditions (including the active enjoyment of men playing women, readable today in the influence of "camp" – see for instance Moe Myer on *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, 1994) have found new forms of expression in contemporary theatre and culture. In terms of reading a gendered theatre history, the male imprint puts rather a strain on the female artist in the theatre as a relative newcomer to a representational apparatus operative within a staunchly patriarchal history. Women first performed on stage roughly one hundred years before feminist author and activist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) published her classic *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (first published 1792). Only a century later, in the early twentieth century, the suffrage movement had not only been born but was already kicking up its heels. This brief 350 year period of women performing on the British stage has seen enormous changes, in both the framing of women and the status of theatre.

In *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on cross-dressing* (1993), Lesley Ferris explores cross-dressing for the theatre from both male-to-female and female-to-male perspectives, in order to emphasise how the histories of theatre and gender are closely connected. Cross-dressing is introduced with reference to theatre productions that have used cross-gender casting as a starting point from which both gender and the text can be interrogated. As Western theatre practices have traditionally rested on the premise of cross-gender casting, which dates back to the Restoration when only men played theatrical roles and female parts were played by young boys, acting women in theatre has a particular history. Ferris contrasts this approach with her research on the cross-gender productions that cast women to play male characters, e.g. in the Mabou Mines version of *Lear*. Ruth Maleczech, who played the role of Lear, described the "astonishing" effect this gender switch had for her: "When a woman has power,

we're forced to look at the nature of power itself" (Ferris 1993, p 3). Maleczech's experience dovetails with my experience of directing *King Lear* at Central School of Speech and Drama (1994, London), where I cast three student actors to play *Lear* as a woman. This casting strategy opened up the play to new meanings focusing on gender, power and authority, challenging the binary male/female gender definitions. *King Lear* provides an acting challenge for older female actors that is not a part of the conventional canon and that helps to reveal the strengths of the older woman actor, such as wisdom, experience and power, and control of her stage space and audience.

Ferris notes that the definitions of gender begin very early, becoming fixed over time. She proposes "transvestite" theatre as a means to opening up gendered readings to offer the spectator the opportunity to read the polysemic possibilities of gender:

> I propose that transvestite theatre – cross-dressing in performance – is an exemplary source of the writerly text, a work that forces the reader/spectator to see multiple meanings in the very act of reading itself, of listening, watching a performance. Unlike the stationary handheld, literary text, a performance text operates in dimensions of real time and real space. Its primary mode of communication is not the spoken or written word; communication occurs through the use of the human body: its movement, gestural language, physicality, costume.
>
> (p 8)

Ferris proposes that an alienated view of gendered meanings can be found in transvestite theatre: one where the spectator is asked to create meanings that may be new or uncomfortable. She labels the spectator/audience "the reader/spectator", a term that activates the potential of the audience to "read" the performance text in an active mode. In her introduction, Ferris looks closely at how a performance can be re-read through the strategy of cross-dressing:

> One of the first readings we are taught in our lives is gender. Is it a man? Is it a woman? We are taught these as bedrock definitions, with no possibility for multiple meanings, no playful ambiguity. As spectators of transvestite theatre

> we are the Barthesian "producers" of text extraordinaire. We are forced to concede to multiple meanings, to ambiguities of thought, feeling, and categorisation, to refuse closure.
>
> (ibid, p 8)

Ferris develops this concept, drawn from Roland Barthes (1974), in order to underpin what we might see as her own uniquely "resistant" strategy of reading and critique: she thereby opens up space for a reading that refuses closure, as central to a strategy of cross-dressing. This same resistant strategy can be equally usefully applied to debates around the issue of cross-gender casting. In both examples (cross-dressing and cross-gender casting), the director makes a deliberate choice to blur the boundaries of gender categories normally seen as fixed, in order to broaden the range of definitions available. This strategy offers multiple meanings rather than a closed set of definitions. Ferris goes on to develop the theme of gendered readings and resistant strategies, developing ideas that can be seen in the context of this thesis as supportive of the strategy of "blurred boundaries". She reminds us that:

> This very sense of playing with thresholds has been a source of controversy since the very beginning of Western theatre. From Plato's condemnation of playing the other (a fear that mimetic freedom was formative, men might tend to become the women they imitate on stage) to the Puritanical anti-theatrical tracts of the English Renaissance, the human body has been a site for repression and possession. Theatrical cross-dressing has provided one way of playing with liminality and its multiple possibilities and extending that sense of the possible to the spectator/reader; a way of play that, while often reinforcing the social mores and status quo, carries with it the possibility for exposing that liminal moment, that threshold of questioning, that slippery sense of a mutable self. As spectators we are invited to read the transvestite body crossing the stage in more than one way.
>
> (ibid, 1993, p 9)

Ferris's description of the liminal moment captures the playful search that characterises the process of drama improvisation. As she concludes her introduction, she notes the key question asked by Peggy Phelan and Alisa Solomon in their articles contained in her book:

> does cross-dressing undermine conventional masculine and feminine behaviour or does it reinscribe the binary, the "truth" of masculinity and femininity?
>
> (ibid, p 18)

When this question is framed by the context of theatre history and the role of women in the theatre, the issues raised are further complicated. My performance work itself raises some of these questions, and through my case studies, I suggest that the "acts" (Butler see Case, 1990, p 279) of gender become visible in the performances in *Di's Midsummer Night Party (2000)* of Tingle as Tolulu Smith and Johar as Preti. This is in part due to the context of performance outside the theatre introduced and discussed in Chapter 3. I employ the term "acts" as Butler does in her article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution":

> …gender cannot be understood as a *role* which either expresses or disguises an interior "self", whether that is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an "act", broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority. As opposed to a view such as Erving Goffman's which posits a self which assumes and exchanges various "roles" within the complex social expectations of the "game" of modern life, I am suggesting that this self is not irretrievably "outside", constituted in social discourse, but that the ascription of interiority is itself a publicly regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication.
>
> (Butler, 1990b, p 297)

So too, Butler argues that gender is not a "role" that can be put on and taken off, but is rather an "acts" of gender, interiorised to serve "a social policy of gender regulation and control" (ibid, p279). Butler discusses transvestite cross-dressing as an example of how gendered "acts" are no more "real" in this unconventional formulation of dressing than are the "acts" of gender that may seem more conventional, such as dressing "as a man" if you are a man…

> The transvestite, however, can do more than simply express the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. If the "reality" of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealised "sex" or "gender" which gender performances ostensibly express. Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies

with social expectations.

(Ibid, p 279)

Just as Butler challenges the concept of essentialism head on, arguing that the construction of gender itself precludes an "unrealised" sex category, giving the transvestite performance equal status with normative gender performances. She casts language as the site of gender construction, where gender is condensed into "meaning", but this "meaning" is unsatisfactory, displacing what is really only "*a stylised repetition* of acts"[19]:

> Insofar as language might be understood to emerge from the materiality of bodily life, that is, as the reiteration and extension of a material set of relations, language is a substitute satisfaction, a primary act of displacement and condensation.
>
> (Butler, 1993, p 69)

I take Butler's notion of "gendered acts" and apply that to the study of gendered performances in which cross-dressing and cross-gendered casting are adopted as political representational strategies. As theatre offers the possibility of reframing gender through performance, this additional layering of a gender-aware framing (whether in dressing or casting) can produce a new form of "active viewing", by stimulating the gaze through dramaturgical and political actions that emerge from the performance text.

Elin Diamond, who studied Brechtian alienation and found a relevant and exciting link to the gaze, argued that:

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19 "…a stylised repetition of acts… which are internally discontinuous… (so that) the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief." (Butler, 1990b, p 270)

> For the nineteenth-century middle-class audience duly impressed by the authority and methods of positivism, theatrical realism fed a hunger for objects that supplied evidence, characters who supplied testimony, plots that cried out for interpretive acuity and pleasurably, judgement. Realism as literature and a mode of production urged and satisfied the pursuit of knowledge, the production of truth.
>
> (Diamond, 1997, p 5)

Here, I want to extend the metaphor set up in Chapter 1, positing the proscenium arch as an architectural and also an ideological construction that frames stylised and artificial but apparently "natural" sets of theatre practices and gender roles on stage. The presence and positioning of the proscenium arch masks the real issues of theatrical production and gendered representation, and distracts audience attention from the lack of support offered in that traditional structure for the artistic expression or aesthetic agendas of minority groups. The traditional theatre system (symbolised by the arch) resists change, perpetuating the same ideas repeatedly, in a mimetic mechanism that "hides its own internal contradictions" (Lemke, 1984, p 98).

Diamond cites examples in Caryl Churchill's plays whereby the social and historical apparatus "that makes the writing impossible" (Diamond, 1997, p 85) are foregrounded. Churchill's work reveals a set of power relations and social apparatus that problematise gender discourses and dynamics, both in the text and on the stage. These contradictions – which can be read in Churchill's texts and subtexts, though she has herself been loath to discuss them (see for instance her rather coy video interview on the OU BBC *Top Girls* video) – may be seen to both highlight and also to mask a system of representations that seems to render "natural" a set of gendered relations which are in fact "acts", in Butler's terms.

In making work outside the mainstream system of theatre productions (through a creative process of "recontextualisation" for instance), the director can stimulate

certain gaps or distances in audience expectation and perception. As in the work of Brecht and his influential writing and practice of the *Verfremdungseffekt* – apparently simple instances of calling attention to a scene or a contradiction in character and staging, or to the sudden shift from a spoken to a musical voice register, can influence the audience's perception of the "reality" or "theatricality" of a scene. Similarly, in the field of social semiotics, Lemke encourages an exploration of the architecture (Lemke, 1984, p 115) of the meaning system, warning of the complexity involved in this process. The architectures of different cultural forms can be studied, compared and contrasted in this complex process of disentangling the impact and operations of different structures of gendered representation. Understanding how these systems are created and sustained on multiple levels can assist the director, and the audience, in finding his or her own approach to implementing adjustments in either structure (within the scene) or interpretation (in extra-scenic terms). These adjustments may take the form of devising characters that stand outside themselves as in a Brechtian approach, drawing attention to their social relationship to the world outside, helping to reveal the meaning making systems in operation.

"Realism" – or what the eighteenth century defined as a literary convention striving for accurate and convincing representations of place and time – can be utilised as a powerful device in theatre and popular culture; the expectations of the "realistic scene" can be set up in a scenographic outline, for instance, and can be suggested in costume and choice of music as well, but can meanwhile be undermined and questioned by the interaction of characters and audiences to which these conventions can be applied in order to maintain existing ideological power structures. The play-text produced for and framed by the proscenium arch creates a set of meanings that

reflects the history of theatre and – especially relevant for this study – the history of women in the theatre.

In her "gestic feminist criticism", Diamond emphasises the role of representation in maintaining reality, and the importance of "dismantling the gaze" to disrupt identification with taken-for-granted meanings:

> Demystifying representation, showing how and when the object of pleasure is made, releasing the spectator from the imaginary and illusionary identifications – these are crucial elements in Brecht's theoretical project. Yet through the 1980s we feminists in drama and theatre studies have attended more to the critique of the gaze than to Brechtian intervention that signals a way of dismantling the gaze. Feminist film theorists, fellow-travelling with psychoanalysis and semiotics, have given us a lot to think about but we, through Brechtian theory, have something to give them: a female body in representation that resists fetishisation and a viable position for the female spectator.
>
> (Diamond, 1997, p 44)

Here, Diamond urges the director, reader and audience to "resist fetishisation" and through this process "to create a viable position for the female spectator" that redresses the balance of gendered representations. She invites theatre makers to participate fully in their own discourse (written and performed) around the area of the gendered gaze, as previously discussed in relation to cinema. Yet the ultimate challenge for the feminist theatre maker is to find appropriate methods, through practice, to explore the question of what the female gaze is or might become. Here, the study opens out to explore the question of what a newly-gendered gaze that deliberately challenges the male/female binary might offer to the field of feminist theatre, and to everyday representational exchanges as well: a question that can be explored and charted through experimental theatre practices.

2.3 An introduction to *gestic feminist criticism*: Elin Diamond

In *Unmaking Mimesis,* Elin Diamond constructs her dramaturgical methodology of "gestic feminist criticism", based on Brecht's earlier theories arising from his practical work of the rough period of the war years (the 1930s-40s): theories of performance read intertextually and transhistorically, alongside those of feminist theory. Diamond's contribution is to refocus the Brechtian paradigm for application to a deliberately feminist mimesis, where the lens is "female" (in opposition to the male gaze described by Laura Mulvey: 1989). In her attempt to define the conditions necessary for the female body to achieve gender visibility, Diamond focuses on the possibility of ideological realisations being discovered, inscribed and "found" on the body (the body female). She combines feminist theory with semiotic analysis in order to create a potential model for achieving the ultimate female lens on the female body.

Gestic feminist criticism

> *Gender,* Verfremdungseffekt
> Sexual (etc) Differences, The "Not… But"
> History, Historicisation
> Spectator, Body, Historicisation
> Spectator, Author, Gestus
>
> (Diamond, 1991, p 45-54)

Diamond organises her gestic feminist criticism around the titles above. She develops these elements of theatre practice to explain how Brechtian terminology – *Verfremdungseffekt,* historicisation and *gestus* can be re-read and applied to analyse performance in a feminist context. The process by which the Brechtian techniques can be developed and layered emerges from Diamond's taxonomy of gestic feminist criticism, where she groups Brecht's classifications for her own ends: e.g. "Spectator, body, historicisation". Here, Brechtian historicisation is combined with the

performer's body and of the role of the spectator as analysed in feminist film criticism (Mulvey, 1989, De Lauretis 1984, 1987) in order to contest the spectator's gaze and its relationship to the female body, suggesting strategies whereby this patriarchal trope can be revealed through theatre practice.

It should be noted that Diamond uses the male gaze and its dominant position in feminist film criticism as her starting point. I draw on Diamond's re-reading of Brecht to create dramaturgical categories as case studies arising from my own theatre practice. In breaking my own practice into small case studies for "strech analysis", I offer a very different approach to the same problem Diamond explores with her gestic feminist criticism, but I apply this new tool toward similar ends: i.e. both my dramaturgical tool and Diamond's theoretical tool are intended to "dismantle the master's house", using new tools made by feminists for use against the restrictions of the proscenium arch. Diamond employs her new critical language in order to show how some examples of feminist performance disrupt the gaze by enlisting the theatre apparatus in a Brechtian way.

2.4 Gender and semiotics

> When spectators "see" gender they are seeing (and reproducing) the cultural signs of gender, and by implication, the gender ideology of a culture.
>
> (Diamond, 1997, pp 45-46)

Diamond encapsulates the symbiotic relationship between the spectator and the process of "reading" gender. Butler and Diamond both emphasise how the process of "reading" gendered in itself confirms the conventional codes inherent in the semiotics

of gender representations. Some performers use the conventional reading of gender as their performance palette. By "citing" these gender codes, the performer draws on the conventional representational codes to highlight the "system of regulatory norms" that constitutes the meaning making system. Culturally specific gender codes in the work of Split Britches and Franca Rame, for example, are relentlessly performed to force their construction onto the spectator.

> In lesbian performance at New York's WOW café – I'm thinking of Holly Hughes' *Lady Dick* and Split Britches' *Upwardly Mobile Home* – and in the broadly satirical monologues of Italy's Franca Rame, gender is relentlessly exposed as "performativity", as a system of regulatory norms which the subject "cites" in order to appear in culture.
>
> (Ibid, p 46)

As Diamond argues, the foregrounding of gender enables the spectator to see "a sign system as a sign system" (ibid, p 47).

The importance of the reading process is thus emphasised by Diamond in her application of gestic feminist criticism, wherein she emphasises the power of the Brechtian contribution as applied to contemporary theatre practice (in that it in its alienation" of gender roles, Brecht's approach can be seen to have raised the ideology of gender up to the surface of theatre practice, where a feminist gestic analysis is made possible and visible.

> Understanding gender as ideology – as a system of beliefs and behaviours mapped across the bodies of women and men which reinforces a social status quo – is to appreciate the continued timeliness of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the purpose of which always is to denaturalise and defamiliarise what ideology – and performativity – makes seem normal, acceptable. Inescapable.
>
> (Ibid, p 47)

I build on Diamond's analysis by applying a semiotic and gestic analysis to my own practice. In Chapter 5 I explain my use of the term recontextualisation (Van Leeuwen, 1986, 1999, 2001) from social semiotics to describe the progressive exteriorisations that characterise my work. As a company, Fragments and

Monuments embodies and performs the undoing of conventional gender codes to reconstruct the identity of the practitioner through practice.

2.5 The corporeal text and semiotics

Susan Melrose (1994) draws on the theoretical ideas of the French "psychoanalytic" feminists Helene Cixous, Luce Iragaray and Julia Kristeva to challenge structural semiotics as a "logocentric" system that reinforces dominant meanings. Melrose argues that too much attention is often paid to linguistics over and above the visual and physical (corporeal, bodily) text. Melrose has, in the past few years, continued to develop a discourse on the "mind and body" split which she sees as inherent to the academy and emerging around the "theory and practice" debate. In her recent paper "The Eventful Articulation of Singularities – or, Chasing Angels" (2003), she suggests the following:

> The most useful alternative, in my own experience, emerges from a slight adjustment: from "theory and practice", to *theoretical practices*, which, in the case of performance-making, I should want to further qualify to read "*mixed-mode theoretical practices*"
>
> (ibid)

Patrice Pavis[20] brings gestus (via Brecht) and semiotics together in order to decode contemporary performance practice. Pavis argues that performance and theatrical strategies can question the status of theatrical mimesis (Pavis, 2000, p 177) as, "the status of the body within the production and reception of the theatrical event" then becomes an important matter for discussion. Pavis examines gestus within the

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20 I attended a workshop on gestus run by Patrice Pavis at the University of Kent in February 2003. A video of the workshop, made by Peter Hutton, will be available in 2004 through artsarchive.com.

Brechtian system in order to establish its basis and functioning. He problematises the process of encoding the libidinal body of the performer, and the dancer in particular. He considers that the definition of the actor "as a bearer" of signs is a reduction of the multiple meanings available from the libidinal body, where he expects a "free circulation of drives and energies" to be available:

> The puritanical rejection of the instinctive and libidinal body in favour of a system of gestures which codifies the social relations and the semiotics of social contradictions has led theoreticians influenced by psychoanalyisis like Lyotard, Deleuze or Vigarello to contest the semiotic system which governs the theory of gestus. According to them, semiotics, as well as Marxism, is based on the transformation of the world into signs, which reduce the stage and the body to a final fixed signified, instead of making it into an open space for a free circulation of drives and energies…
>
> (Pavis, p 180)

Although Pavis is right to warn of how analysis can "dry" out the creative process, analysis can also invigorate the performance. Analysis can bring a rigour and discipline where structure is strengthened, giving the intuitive aspects of performance a safe space in which to find expression.

> They *are* their body and are determined to overcome the dualism in which all society would like to keep them. Hence their difficulty in accepting slogans and instructions like "alienation" or "gestus", since they are reluctant to put themselves outside themselves, in order to evaluate, from a distance, the effect of their gestures.
>
> (p. 180)

In my experience, analytical discourses that develop and are articulated in the devising and rehearsal processes, can be problematic. There is a need, in both rehearsal and performance, for the performer to maintain some critical distance from a self-conscious awareness of role. Even so, the resulting performance may be informed by history, politics and awareness of self-identity, or may be seen as "gestic". Di Sherlock (who played Mary Wollstonecraft in *Di's Midsummer Night Party*) was reluctant to acknowledge or discuss the role of gestus or alienation in development of her approach to her role (at least in the pre-production phase), although at an early

stage I encouraged her to discuss her acting processes and to articulate the responses she was working to achieve. I was keen for her acting choices to be made visible so that her characterisation of Wollstonecraft would be readable through the frame of her own skill as an actor. In practice, Sherlock's gestus was made visible, despite her determination not to enact that gestus consciously. This revelation was achieved, not through engagement in any lengthy analytical discussion – although my directorial language, both spoken and gestural may have influenced this process- but rather through a more subtle process of finding a shared language that was more intuitive and that made a better fit with the sense of trust inherent to her own process.

2.6 The Active Reader: The work of Jill Dolan

> The feminist critic can be seen as a "resistant reader", who analyses a performance's meaning by reading against the grain of stereotypes and resisting the manipulation of both the performance text and the cultural text that it helps to shape. By exposing the ways in which dominant ideology is naturalised by the performance's address to the ideal spectator, feminist performance criticism works as political intervention in an effort toward cultural change.
>
> (Dolan, 1991, p 2)

In *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1991) and *Presence and Desire* (1993), Jill Dolan takes up where Mulvey and others left off, arguing the case for reading gender dynamics in the gaze of theatre contexts as well as in cinema. In her important work, Dolan enlarges the discussion of the role of the reader and spectator as active feminist interventionist in the processes of making meaning. Dolan acknowledges the value of her experience of doing an artist's residency[21] in 1989 – an experience she shared with Elin Diamond, Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, among others – as significant in

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21 At Wolf Pen Women Writer's Colony in Prospect, Kentucky. The residency was funded by the

helping her develop her ideas on the feminist spectator.

Dolan (1991) expands the role of the critic in relationship to theatre practice by showing how lesbian desire itself constructs her position as an active reader, and argues that this position can be used to help in the construction of new meanings around gendered formations. As a former actor who experienced "being looked at" through the male gaze when she herself occupied the on stage position, Dolan recontextualised her own experience and undertook an exercise in critical distancing and analysis, in order to explain the importance of the "feminist spectator" by framing this role as central in the reading of gendered meanings, both in performance and everyday life.

As a materialist feminist critic formulating feminist performance theory, Dolan demands a new critical language. She emphasises the role of feminist criticism in creating feminist theatres by developing the practice of criticism into feminist, lesbian contexts, drawing attention to the role of dominant criticism in maintaining the status quo.

The contentious show *Dress Suits for Hire*, by American performance artists Holly Hughes, Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw, demonstrates for Dolan (1991, p 119) how the means of production – in this case, the venue for the show – affect the reading of performance. In her discussion of that show in the 1990s, Dolan made the point that if *Dress Suits for Hire* (first produced in 1987) had been produced off-Broadway, the audience might have been disappointed that their expectations of realism would have

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Kentucky Foundation for Women (Case, 1990, p 40).

been unfulfilled, and that the more "Brechtian" readings available from this production would have been unavailable to the audience, due to the context of production.

Dolan was concerned with two linked questions in her analysis:

- whether theatre events can intervene in public consciousness to affect real social change (and if so, how), and also,
- what the relationship of the feminist critic to feminist cultural production might be.

She acknowledges the varied responses of spectators mixed across ideologies of gender, sexuality, race and class, and her project is located within the differences that will inevitably demand new forms and provoke new meanings when they are inscribed in representation.

In *Presence and Desire* (1993) Dolan analyses the performance of women on stage and pinpoints her *desire* for the women performing on stage as a key motivator for her study. The desire described by Dolan is the subversive trigger that gives her role as feminist theatre critic the power to analyse critically from a position of difference. Traditional theatre criticism is of course written from the male standpoint, where desire is for the woman by the male critic. It is Dolan's identity as a lesbian that positions her outside the conventional representational structures of gender that gather around the dominance of heterosexual identity in early 21st century Western Anglo-American culture. Dolan shares with Butler a clear intention to differentiate herself from the dominant heterosexual imperative, and it is this move outside dominant representational systems that fuels her argument.

2.7 Acting: The problem of whose truth is being acted and in whose body – an actor's account of her struggle with Stanislavski

The psychological construction of character adapted from the "method" of Constantine Stanislavski (1863-1938) places the female actor within the range of systems that have oppressed her own representation on stage. The Stanislavski "method" has had a very significant impact on the development of acting in the Western theatre. Because of the importance placed by the "method" on the internal motivation of the actor, the actor's unconscious memory becomes essential for the inner construction of character. The techniques for the inner construction of character rely on Freudian principles, leading the female actor into the misogynist view of female sexuality.

> Female characters, when they do have a complex psychological base, are usually frustrated and unfulfilled – like the Electra on whom their complex is based, they wait for the male to take the subject position of the action. The desire is for him to act for their own fulfilment.
>
> (Case, 1988, p 122)

Actor Lauren Love has recently become known for her articulation of "a feminist actor's approach: resisting the organic" (Zarilli, 1995). In her writing, she describes her own resistance to the Stanislavski method, which has both informed her professional career and given her a launching point for feminist reinterpretation. As a Stanislavskian-trained actor, but simultaneously as a feminist actor, Love finds the "organic approach" to acting suggested by Stanislavski inappropriate because of the absence of stated ideological interests in the working method.

The concept of emotion memory on which the Stanislavski system is based is linked

to the notion of "truth" as a determined and quantifiable reality and a universal constant in the Stanislavski method. Love contests this notion and therefore the theatrical results built upon it. From her experience as an actor, she argues that truth and reality are differently constructed for different people (and she cites her feminist positioning on stage and in relation to her own self-identity as an instance of this contradiction). Love argues that:

> a performance technique which allows the actor to point to the construction of her gender needs to be developed as a bridge between theory and practice. I am eager for a feminist approach to acting which will empower me to deconstruct play-texts.
>
> (Love, 1995, p 276)

And for Stanislavski,

> Truth was his aim for art, and the approach he developed for the actor was based in psychological realism and its search for universal human values.
>
> (Stanislavski, 1937, p 276)

Love goes on to describe the pitfalls she encountered in her rehearsal and performance of the role of Gwendolyn in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*:

> As a feminist actor, my performance experiences in conventional theatre grew increasingly frustrating, because my corporeal presence within its representational frames demands my complicity with an ideology I seek to resist. The very fact of my biology on stage commodifies my presence – I become an object to be traded between the male characters and the male spectators.
>
> (Ibid, p 275)

The presence of Love's body in the representational frame – that is, her live body, not just her cinematic or virtual double – challenges and pushes at the limits of Mulvey's argument, showing how the actor's body is controlled by cultural and social codes outside the actor's control. Mulvey argued that dominant social codes found in mainstream film tended to "code the erotic into the language of dominant patriarchal order" (1989, p 16). Love, writing five years later and from the perspective of a

theatre practitioner, described her experience as an actor as coded through the process of direction to the point where she felt subjugated by the oppressive sense of "being looked-at-ness".

When the actor is given the opportunity to devise her own text, she can resist the pitfalls of responding to a given text where her "corporeal presence" is represented in a set of "representational frames" constructed by someone else – in the devising process she can do it herself.

The notion of "truth" in acting becomes less fraught as the actor is able to define her parameters. She can seek to avoid the compromise that occurs in conventional settings, where Stanislavskian-based acting techniques expect the actor to "give" a psychologically truthful performance in a naturalistic setting. In this way the objective truth desired by the Stanislavskian-trained actor turns into an ideological contest between levels of truth, the status of truth and the question of whose truth: a complex scenario which Dolan describes as follows:

> . . .placing women in a representation always connotes an underlying ideology and presents a narrative driven by male desire that effectively denies women's subjectivity.
>
> (Dolan, 1991, p 57)

If this is the case then, Love asks (though not in direct reply to Dolan):

> how do I reconcile my politics with my work as an actor in conventional theatre? What is my potential to resist objectification from a position within representation?
>
> (Love, 1995, p 274)

Lauren Love –feminist actor and resistant critic – is not particularly interested in the pursuit of "universal human values" in her work or in theatre work in general; rather she recognises that a particular set of human values represents one privileged group

(and in the case of gendered representations on stage, the privileged group is bound to be "white middle-class men"). If such a biased and clearly gendered version of "truth" becomes naturalised and therefore seen as superior to other versions of "truth", the resulting hierarchy is implicit in some performances where the Stanislavskian approach to acting is the starting point. The "truth" to which Stanislavski's acting students aspire is embedded in dominant ideology. As Love explains, the method has its roots in discourses of psychological realism and liberal humanism; this ideological content is "masked" in the promotion of method acting as "a tool, for truthful acting". Love goes on to describe how she attempts to challenge what she calls "the boundaries of theatre" by using:

> . . . the psychological techniques from my training to manipulate my emotional responses, along with Brechtian techniques that allow me to maintain a critical distance from my character and to become a "thinking actor" – in a 1989 production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest,* in which I played the role of Gwendolyn.
>
> (Ibid, p 280)

2.8 Summary

By weaving my experience as a Trainee Director at the Royal Court Theatre, under the mentorship of Max Stafford-Clark (Chapter 1), through some key examples of feminist performance theory (Chapter 2), the foundations for Chapter 3 have been set up to offer a detailed analysis based on Brechtian principles of gestus and alienation, leading to and a feminist re-reading of Brecht's strategies by Elin Diamond. The focus of my argument here closes in on detailed discussion of the visibility of gender. In the conventional production of cultural artefacts, where a traditional patriarchal economic and social model is still in place, and a "male gaze" is therefore still

dominant, it is a challenge for feminist theatre makers to engage critically in the effort to redirect images and visual frames of and for masculine desire, for the empowerment of the female viewer. Here, of course, I am eliding much more detailed arguments that have been elegantly and convincingly made by Dolan et al: arguments about the dynamics of the female to female gaze, the democracy of the gaze in homosexual as well as heterosexual sites, etc.

De Lauretis proposes that "we must walk out on the male-centred frame of reference in which gender and sexuality are (re) produced by the discourse of male sexuality" (De Lauretis, 1987, p 17). She maps out an alternative space for the spectator where the female subject is the site of difference, not just difference in relation to the male. By foregrounding the gaze itself through the mechanism of alienation, Diamond's approach harnesses the Brechtian language developed from his practice for feminist ends.

The following chapter outlines the precise dramaturgical contribution made by Diamond's "seminal" work, *Unmaking Mimesis*. This work, and my detailed analysis and applicatin of its key ideas, have been crucial to the development of this body of performance research and to the new framework of dramaturgical categories introduced in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3

Brecht and Gestic Feminist Criticism: The process of foregrounding in selected plays by April De Angelis and Caryl Churchill

This chapter discusses a number of the plays that have influenced my development process as a director during six key years (1988-1994). Three plays written by young British female playwrights during the late nineteen eighties and early nineteen nineties which all had an impact on the use of the interior and exterior stage space in the production of new writing, are introduced. These are *Ironmistress* (De Angelis, 1989), *My Mother Said I Never Should* (Keatley, 1991) and *Low in the Dark* (Carr, 1994). These examples help to show how a gendered scenography can be applied to develop the domestic / interior space and its relationship to the exterior public space. The exterior public space as a site for the construction of gendered meanings through social interaction is addressed. In a new analysis the dramaturgical potential of the exterior space in *Ironmistress* by April de Angelis[22] (directed by Anna Birch) is discussed.

As the exterior stage space is argued as a site that can be useful in the feminist project to re-stage the gaze this approach, arising from my practice starts to be linked to the Brechtian alienation technique. For Brecht the ideological implications of dramatic action on stage were of utmost importance. The process of alienation is then extended

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[22] See Appendix G for CV

to include Elin Diamond's feminist rereading of Brecht – gestic feminist criticism. I give examples of how the alienation technique is used to help to foreground gender in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, both by Caryl Churchill[23].

The process of alienation can be described as one where the ideology of dramatic action is brought to the spectator's attention in an attempt to demonstrate the construction of power in social relationships. Elin Diamond's feminist re-reading of Brecht – gestic feminist criticism builds on the Brechtian imperative to examine and demonstrate the construction of ideology, she enlists this technique to determine the status of the gaze on the gendered body. I give examples of how the alienation technique is used to help to foreground gendered readings in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, both by Caryl Churchill[24].

I define two aspects of Brechtian theatre practice: *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation technique) and the *gestus*. I give an overview of how and where these practices are to be found as dramaturgical instances in a close analysis of the above plays. The plays are then discussed with reference to gestic feminist criticism (Diamond, 1997) whereby the shift from his Marxist point of view, without a perspective on the relationship of gender to issues of power and control shifts through Diamonds re-reading to show how the role of the social in the construction of gendered meanings can be staged.

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23 See Appendix G for CV
24 See Appendix G for CV

3.1 Dramatic action and the play-text

Dramatic action takes place "on location", whether in a kitchen (as in *Look Back in Anger,* 1965 by John Osbourne), front room (as in *Hedda Gabler*, 1890 by Henrik Ibsen) or in a park (as in *Saved*, 1965 by Edward Bond). These dramatists use their chosen locations to connote social and political meanings. I argue that the locations also impact on the performance of gendered readings in these plays.

In developing new plays I research the location described by the playwright with the actors and use this process to inform the rehearsal process. I continue to research the location in depth, and where possible the location is now also the location of the performance. Between 1988 and 1994 I staged work in exterior settings within the theatre building – *Ironmistress, My Mother Said I Never Should* (Keatley, 1991) and *Low in the Dark* (Carr, 1994) to emphasise the gender meanings by foregrounding the choice of location or staging.

The stage directions given by the writers for the three plays named above, had a major impact on my understanding of the importance of location in the process of reading gendered meanings in performance and working with exterior stage settings, and more recently in external locations.

Exterior stage settings

(See fig 3)

How using exterior staging can make gender visible

3.1.

3.2

3.3

Figure 3.1. *Ironmistress* by April de Angelis (1989)
Figure 3.2. *My Mother Said I Never Should* by Charlotte Keatley (1991)
Figure 3.3. *Low in the Dark* by Marina Carr (1994)

Ironmistress

The date: 1840 or thereabouts

Prologue

The sound of the furnace, of wind

My Mother Said I Never Should

The action takes place in Manchester, Oldham and London.

The setting should not be naturalistic. The design should incorporate certain objects which remain on stage throughout, such as the piano in Act One and Two, a tub of geraniums, a patch of wasteground. There are no sofas in this play. The setting should simply be a magic place where things can happen.

In the child scenes, each girl is dressed contemporary to her own generation, in the clothes each wears as a child in the "real" time scenes; e.g. Margaret wears her Christmas frock, Jackie wears her 1961 dress.

Act One

Scene One

The Wasteground, a place where girls come to play

Low in the Dark

Stage left: Bizarre bathroom; bath, toilet and shower.
Stage right: Made space, tyres, rims, unfinished walls and blocks strewn about.
The floor is chequered in cream and black.

As a director of these plays I suggest that female roles can be performed in an epic style, helping to lift the reception of these roles out of conventional readings. The use of the exterior space, the social space, constructs the social gestus. The importance of reinscribing "theatrical bodies" for the purpose of understanding and developing gender relations is stressed by Peggy Phelan (1992, p 30). The juxtaposition of the female body and the exterior social space achieves this reinscription by foregrounding conventional patriarchal attitudes to gender. Conventional gendered readings fail to

articulate gender as a phenomena constructed through the complex patterning of individual subjectivity. The social construction of subjectivity is foregrounded to communicate "more enabling markers of gender".

> In excessively marking the boundaries of the woman's *body,* in order to make it thoroughly visible, patriarchal culture subjects it to legal, artistic, and psychic surveillance. This, in turn, reinforces the idea that she is her body.
> (in Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996, p 221)

The challenge for postcolonial dramatists – both male and female – is to refuse such body politics while reinscribing all the "theatrical bodies" through representation with more enabling markers of gender.

3.2 Brecht and the public space

By moving outside the proscenium arch to a public site, the social and political content of the outside world is brought into a shared context with the live performance (see the *Di's Midsummer Night Party* case study, Chapter 5). Because the interior psyche is understood as socially constructed by outside social influences, it can be interrogated through the epic, public space. In this way the social nature of psychology becomes an epic phenomenon, not a bourgeois individual responsibility.

Reinelt discusses the use of public space in the theatre as a way into internal psychological landscapes. She quotes Howard Brenton from an early interview in which he defines the dramatic and political potential that can be activated in dramatic writing set in an exterior space:

> You could say that there are two kinds of plays – those set in rooms and those outside rooms…outside means using an epic structure.
> (Itzin & Trussler, 1975, p 19ff)

Reinelt builds on Brenton to say:

> The advantage to an outdoor setting is that the play is kept "public", a term that for Brenton is more precise than political.
>
> (Reinelt, 1996, p 19)

Brenton creates the scenography for the domestic interiors in his plays by employing inventive devices. For example, in *Sore Throats* (Brenton, 1986), an empty apartment for rent is the setting for the breakdown of a marriage. The stage design provides the social context to push a domestic situation into an epic drama. Janelle Reinelt recognised the distinctive power of scenography in creating and sharing political meaning, and referred to Brecht's timely understanding of the power of scenography and the ways in which staging can be of great value as a contextualising element in considering larger sign systems such as gender and power:

> To make these transactions intelligible, the environment in which people lived had to be brought to bear in a big and significant way. This environment had of course been shown in the existing drama, but only as seen from the central figure's point of view, and not as an independent element.
>
> (Reinelt, 1996, p 21)

I take up this analysis of the power of scenography, of framing ideas and images as well as bodies and words in space, and apply this to my study of dramaturgy.

The process of creating the stage picture as a key element in the dramaturgy is developed in my thesis, with reference to *Ironmistress* – where the mother/daughter relationship finds its connection to wider social and political issues in the use of an exterior set design. In this new analysis of *Ironmistress,* the social and political context is brought into relationship with the personal and psychological challenges faced by the characters.

3.3 *Ironmistress*: Analysis

3.3.1 Research data

The research data comprises the director's book and the published script (De Angelis, 1999), plus a collection of production photographs. I use the script to remind me of the production, and in the main the analysis is based on the development of the script and the subsequent direction of the play. I am therefore not making a textual analysis of *Ironmistress*; this is an analysis as the director of the first production of the play.

By developing key points from the script development and production of *Ironmistress*, this process is mapped out to show the development of the role of a feminist theatre director:

Key points from my director's notebook

Visceral
Women-centred
Tackling issues of power and control
Exterior atmosphere
Poetic
Women's achievement

Not naturalism

> This play would not have been staged by an all-women's theatre company a decade ago: then the genre's unspoken convention called for Woman as heroine, or moral superior at the very least. ReSisters Theatre's energetic and provocative production is both a comment on 1980s Britain and a reflection of the state of post-feminism.
>
> (Gordan, 1989)

ReSisters moved away from the agitprop/issue-based theatre they had successfully developed in the past to something different, something "more like a play but not naturalism" (De Angelis in Remnant, 1990, p 28). When De Angelis began her research she discovered that:

> It soon became clear, however, that the history of women and work is mainly

> the history of women's exclusion from the workplace, with the exception of work that takes place in the home or that mimics such work. I felt loath to begin ReSisters' new theatrical enterprise with a play set in a front room or office. I was also reluctant for my work to be confined to an exploration purely of the domestic arena.
>
> (Ibid)

De Angelis is drawn to an external setting as a way of discovering an alternative to the "kitchen sink" setting of realist British drama. The realist British drama genre, although radical in its analysis of class, further entrenched the female character's subservient position on the British stage.[25]

3.3.2 Visual text v written text

By setting *Ironmistress* in an exterior location I created a scenographic language comprising of exterior and interior locations for symbolic effect. The blurring of the boundary between exterior and interior locations is a trope that continues to resonate in this work. In this case, the atmosphere of the iron foundry was written into the script and inspired an epic approach to the stage design:

> LITTLE COG: I can see everything from this hilltop.
> Everything. The chimneys of the iron furnace, the roof of the iron foundry.
> I can hear things too, the hammer of the bellows
> Pumping air to fan the furnace flames, or the cries of men
> When the hot metal is spat on their skin from the fires.
>
> (Ibid, p 3)

The atmosphere suggests the emotional state of the mother and her daughter (Martha Darby and Little Cog) living together in the Ironmaster's house after his death. Their relationship is tense, passionate and frightening and this emotional landscape is

---

[25] One exception is Churchill's *Blue Heart* (1997). Although set in a kitchen, this play provides a very convincing challenge to the kitchen sink genre, with its repeats and scary entrances from the

mirrored in the description given by Little Cog of the iron foundry. The overlapping texts created by the performers, their dialogue and the scenography merge to create a layer of meaning that transcends the already unconventional story of the Ironmistress.

Little Cog and her mother practise the way that Little Cog might behave with a suitor through role-play. This theatrical technique heightens the non-naturalistic space already marked out by the continuous presence of the furnace and Martha Darby's strange and powerful antics. As a bulimic who swallows the keys to the iron foundry, the character of Martha Darby creates a gestus describing the personal and political position held by this woman in the middle of the 18th century. Later she re-enacts a similar ritual from her childhood with a quill pen belonging to her father.

MARTHA: Later I got back that feather pen
And swallowed it.
Hid it so no one else could have it
Or take it away.
I swallowed it like it was a piece of myself,
Better if it was iron, not feather.
I remember feeling cold even though it was a warm day.

(Ibid, p 9)

The ingestion of the quill pen symbolises the uneasy relationship Martha Darby has as a woman of influence and economic independence. She ingests the patriarchal system, which oppresses and feeds her. She blurs the boundary between body and the outside world, emphasised as she tries to ingest the system of power that excludes her because she is a woman. The pen is her father's and used for accounts; she replays the memory from her childhood when she found the pen and Little Cog role-plays her father. This reversal of roles merges Martha Darby's as a young girl with childhood unfolding for her daughter as she spies on her mother. Time is condensed and the

---

kitchen cupboards by an ostrich, terrorists and children!

mother-daughter relationship collapsed into a motif signalling patriarchal oppression.

3.3.3 Fragments of history

De Angelis revels in the possibilities afforded by poetic licence, in this case her reconstruction of a historical fragment discovered in Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale, UK. The "real" Ironmistress was the sister of a deceased ironmaster and De Angelis rewrites history to serve her purpose. Through her rewriting she is enabled to write through the lens of her own relationship with her mother.[26]

> The idea for *Ironmistress* came when I read a few sentences about a woman called Sarah Darby who had inherited her brother's ironworks at Coalbrookdale in the early nineteenth century.
>
> (Ibid, p 28)

Sarah Darby, who became Martha Darby, raised issues of power. "What does it mean for a woman to have power in a 'man's world?'" De Angelis demanded in the early stages of writing (ibid). The working-class/oppressed perspective written into Shanny Pinns, the half-fictional, half-real creation of Martha's daughter, celebrates the power of the female imagination. Symbolically the underdog, Shanny Pins lives "outside", surrounded by the elements and a victim of male sexual abuse. This character (written as Little Cog) signals a warning to all women who transgress the boundaries of patriarchy.

Playing with text, sound and location, De Angelis produces a scorching indictment of the social construction of identity under a patriarchal system to signify the possibility of transgressing boundaries of gender and time.

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[26] *Ironmistress* is dedicated to De Angelis's mother

3.3.4 Psychoanalysis

> Stylistically, language and the world of dreams and fantasies became very important in *Ironmistress*, allowing for the psychological aspects of the situation to be foregrounded as opposed to the purely material ones.
>
> (Ibid, p 28)

Dreams and fantasies are harnessed to bring out the psychological text, and De Angelis expresses her desire to show the social construction of identity and subjectivity embedded in perception:

> I wanted the feeling that there was as much pressure building up in the private world of the Darby's as in the furnace outside it, forging another link between the two worlds.
>
> (Ibid)

Her writing is soaked in psychoanalytic metaphor used to express the visual and audio text (in this case the overheating furnace) as a reminder of the industrial revolution and its social impact on women. De Angelis points to the link made in my production between Little Cog, the statue of a woman made by the dead owner of the foundry and Shanny Pins (ibid). I represented the statue by a large shadow of Little Cog thrown onto corrugated iron, casting the episode into a world of fantasy, strengthening parallels between Little Cog, Shanny Pins and the statue. The embodiment of femininity is created through this visual trope. The body of the actress playing Little Cog (daughter) transforms into Shanny Pins (outsider) and finally is projected as the statue (this statue had been the object of the Ironmaster's masturbating episode, observed by his wife). Any fixed meaning attached to Little Cog's identity is subverted, creating a gestus that signifies the complexities of patriarchal abuse and female identity.

3.4 The exterior location

In this section, I explore "the exterior location" and its potential as a site where gendered meanings can be re- mapped. In de Angelis's play *Ironmistress*, for example, an exterior space was created where the relationship between the mother and daughter were viewed alongside the public world beyond their home and close domestic situation, and could therefore be "read' for signs of power and control in larger terms. In her book *Woman's Theatrical Space* (1994) Hanna Scolnicov considered a range of examples from theatre events wherein the configuration of the theatrical space was in itself the site where women's experience could be "read". Scolnicov cites Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86), who – in her landmark text, *The Second Sex*, offered compelling arguments and polemic to set the scene for the contemporary view of gender as socially constructed. De Beauvoir's arguments have obvious and far-reaching relevance to contemporary considerations of spatial relationships in gendered role play (in the theatre and in everyday life):

> Man is but mildly interested in his immediate surroundings because he can find self-expression in projects, whereas for woman, the house is the centre of the world, reality is concentrated inside the house, while outer space seems to collapse.
>
> (Found in Scolnicov, 1994, p 6)

From her point of view De Beauvoir pin points, in dramatic terms the relationship of women and men to the outside and inside of the house. She describes the relationship between the interior domestic world and the exterior public world as gendered to the point that for the woman the house or domestic interior may be the centre of her world. This relationship to domestic space signifies for the woman a position of exclusion from the public world. Scolnicov sets out to clarify the relationship between theatrical space and these related and important issues of gendered representation:

> From the spatial point of view, the world of men and the world of women

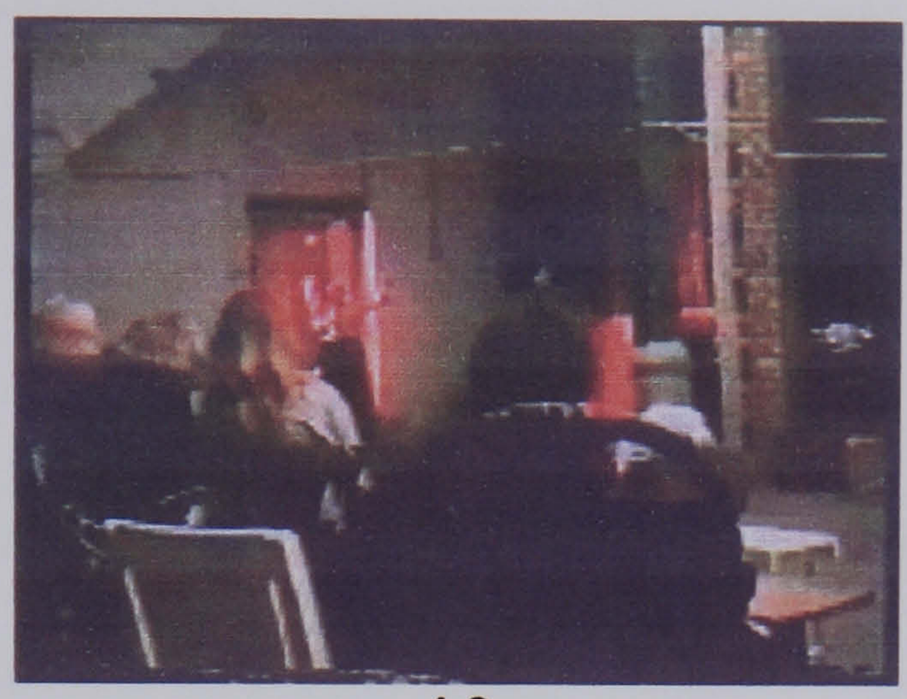
> meet on the threshold. Thus, the very shape a play gives its theatrical space is indicative of its views on the nature of the relationship between the sexes and on the position of women in society. (Ibid)

If the interior domestic space is strongly classified/framed as a female domain and the exterior public space as the male domain the boundary between the two worlds draws attention to the power relationships inherent in gendered relationships. By blurring the boundary or interrogating the frame relationships between the exterior and interior locations, I develop an overarching strategy for bringing attention to the construction of gender. The move between the exterior and the interior space is therefore a form of communication in itself. In the set of images drawn from – *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, *Lovely Stones* and *Di's Midsummer Night Party* – the framing of exterior and interior spatial relationships is introduced. (See figures 4.1-4.4).

In 4.1, from *Dogs Are Alone too and They Live!*, Adela (played by Tracey Bickley) is in close proximity with her audience in this hot and intimate train carriage space. She lies on the floor in an exposed sexual position, challenging the conventional audience gaze. Her body language suggests sexual availability, but her performance is one of self-confidence in her physical strength and ability to control her personal space. The large warehouse (4.2) used for *Lovely Stones* contrasts with the intimate performance space of a coach where the show begins. The warehouse space is set up as a hotel but the setting resonates with a history of neglect in an epic public space.

Exterior and Interior locations

4.1



4.2

4.3

4.4

Figure 4.1 *Dogs are alone too and they Survive!* (1996)
Figure 4.2 *Lovely Stones* (1998)
Figure 4.3 *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)
Figure 4.4 *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)

As a contrast, the monumental image of Clissold House (*Tenuta Diana)* is coherent from a distance (4.3), but as the guests move toward the house they hear popular music played loudly and multiple images of dancers in hats (after Princess Diana) bringing this apparently abandoned house to life. This juxtaposition of popular and classical stimulates the lost memory of the house now abandoned, creating a new context with new conventions.

The doorway (4.4) with welcoming red light behind it encourages the guests to enter as if into a safe domestic space. This experience is then undercut by a series of mirrors hanging from the walls, reflecting the guests and the performers in multiple versions. The individual, unified image is fragmented and distorted to draw attention to the fallacies surrounding appearance and the coherent female image promoted through popular culture. (See showreel on DVD-Rom attached).

These examples all show how the use of space affects the dramatic action in this piece. By bringing the exterior space into relationship with the interior space, the conventional context of meaning making is subverted and questioned. The historicity of the sites creates the conditions for meanings to be unlocked and less fixed. Context inscribes signs with meaning to a point where these meanings become fixed. By changing the context, closure can be curtailed, allowing a polysemic repertoire to emerge.

3.5 Definitions of the alienation effect and gestus

The seductive possibilities inherent in realism as an aesthetic can be found in Hollywood cinema. The plot and cinematography of film are constructed to take the spectator into the imagined reality enacted on the cinema screen, giving it the status of "taken-for-granted reality". Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) enlisted everything at his disposal as a theatre director and playwright to push "taken-for-granted reality" into relief. It was his belief that this process of heightening or deconstructing reality had the political power to educate his audience about the maintenance of dominant ideology (hegemony) through social practice. Two techniques he used for this end are defined here as follows:

Alienation technique (*Verfremdungseffekt*)

Brecht used music, placards and film and revealed the theatre apparatus (lighting grid and wings) in order to alienate or foreground the ideological messages in his work. He attempted to "wake up" his audience to the narrative (not plot as in realist theatre) as it unfolds before them. The spectator/performer relationship is articulated through the use of dramaturgical and scenographic signs, with the intention to foreground the social and historical context of the work.

Gestus

The gestus questions theatrical mimesis and forces the spectator to define the status of the body within the production and reception of the theatrical event (Pavis, 2000, p 177). Gestus brings together the scenography and the dramaturgy to create a visual and verbal phrase that encapsulates a social and historical moment. Brecht shows

how meanings can be constructed on the stage to emphasise the social construction of a particular social interaction in response to the "realist" theatre in which the imitation of reality (mimesis) is considered to be the objective. The gestus helps to deconstruct reality, breaking down the elements of history (historicisation), for example, and bring this part of the content to the spectator's attention in preference to the mimetic content. Brecht argues: "The gestic principle takes over, as it were, from the principle of imitation." (Willett, 1987, p 86)

Gestus as a stage sign

> If the gestus invites us to think about performers and spectators in their historical and sexual specificity, it also asks us to consider the author's inscription.
>
> (Ibid, p54)

Diamond cites Pavis, who notes that the author's inscription – which includes the era of performance and the style of acting – are basic parts of the gestus inscribed by the author. In devised plays the position of the author changes; the collectivity of the devised authorial voice gives further emphasis to the consciousness of the era in which the play is authored and the place and the time of performance.

The issues around authority in women's writing and the recovery of women's history can be interrogated through the "spectator, author, gestus" (Diamond, 1991, pp 45-54) by distancing (alienating) the relationship between the elements to demonstrate their capacity for ideological patterning.

3.6 Gestic feminist criticism: Selected concepts

As discussed in Chapter 2, Diamond constructs a dramaturgical methodology that she calls "gestic feminist criticism", based on Brechtian theories of performance read intertextually with feminist theory. In her attempt to define the conditions necessary for the female body to achieve gender visibility, Diamond focuses on the possibility of ideological realisations being found on the body and combines feminist theory with semiotics to model how this can be achieved.

In the following section I define the main characteristics of her model and show how she has enlisted Brecht (a gender analysis is absent from his work) in her strategy for a feminist mimesis.

3.6.1 Gender *Verfremdungseffekt*

Diamond uses this term to describe how the alienation technique can be used to critique gender. A distance is created between the audience and the performer by the performer's self-conscious reflection on the process of acting and delivery of the character. The distance created through the body, costume and staging helps the construction of gender to be questioned – "words, gestures, appearances, ideas, and behaviour that dominant culture understands as indices of feminine or masculine identity" (Diamond, 1997, p 45) can be critiqued when gender is foregrounded.

> When gender is "alienated" or foregrounded, the spectator is able to see what s/he *can't* see: a sign system *as* a sign system.
>
> (Ibid, p 47)

The process of reading gender signs in itself reproduces and maintains the dominant meaning system. Diamond suggests that the emergence of a feminist sign system is possible through the alienation effect whereby the meaning systems can be decoded. By foregrounding gender through the alienation technique, the ideological motivation of gender signs becomes available to the spectator/reader.

3.6.2 Sexual (etc) differences, the "not… but"

In *Cloud Nine* the cross-gender casting of Betty (played by a man) shows the construction of femininity from a male Victorian point of view, because of the absence of a female performer in the role of Betty.

Diamond transposes the Brechtian "not… but" formation to argue for the existence of sexual difference. Sexual difference is brought to the attention of the spectator as the text that is not shown, but given equal status to what is seen. In *Top Girls* the female actors' presence articulates the absence of the male gender. By their theatricality and ownership of the space (the restaurant), the text is foregrounded to draw attention to the absence of men, which in turn comments on the space taken up by men in conventional power relations. The controlling presence of men is also invoked through the women's stories, as the women regain power, healing their trauma through the cathartic storytelling process.

3.6.3 History, Historicisation

> The crux of "historicisation" is change; through A-effects spectators observe the potential movement in class relations, discover the limitations and strengths of their own perceptions, and begin to change their lives.
>
> (Ibid, p 49)

Whereas for Brecht social experience is understood through a patriarchal lens that does not account for female experience, Diamond emphasises the female experience through history. In a note she defines historicity as "the constantly negotiated interpretation of the subject's own history in relation to social and historical understandings" (Ibid, p 194). The achievements of women and women's experience of social power and control mechanisms are foregrounded. In male-dominated his/tory, this material is not expressed; here historicisation techniques can be used to tell her story. The material conditions experienced by women and their achievements are brought centre stage to resist the dominant historical narrative defined by male discourse. The practice of foregrounding history is key to the Brechtian project, because it is through history that the construction of ideology can be understood. Diamond insists on the importance of context and history in the understanding of gender construction and the creation of gender visibility. For the feminist theatre director, recovering the achievements of women hidden from history and pinpointing the material conditions of women are important developments of historicisation techniques.

> When the Brechtian feminist performer alienates her/his own gendered, racial or ethnic history, when the body is "historicised", the spectator is invited to move through and beyond imagination, to rethink their own difference and contradiction.
>
> (Ibid, p xiv)

3.6.4 Spectator, body, historicisation

> If feminist theory is concerned with the multiple and complex signs of a woman's life – her desires and politics, her class, ethnicity, or race – what I want to call her historicity, Brechtian theory gives us a way to put that historicity in view – in the theatre.
>
> (Ibid, p 52)

Historicisation (as defined above) is brought forward to meet the relationship between the actor's body and the spectator. In this way the actor's body can become the conveyor of historical materialist and feminist meaning as observed by the spectator. The issues around the spectator and the body and history are developed by Diamond to suggest that a Brechtian/feminist performing body can have the quality of "looking-ness" that brings the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of Mulvey (1989) into a reverse position. The performer actively performs the history of the male gaze as a part of this corporeal semiotic. Diamond anticipates that "this Brechtian-feminist body is paradoxically available for *both* analysis and identification, paradoxically within representation while refusing its fixity" (ibid). I offered examples from my own practice where the "fixity" of representational codes is challenged, by exterior staging used for selected new plays earlier in this chapter. In *Ironmistress*: A new analysis and key example to show how exterior staging draws attention to the relationship between the interior psychological preoccupations of a character and the exterior public issues. Chapter 6 extends and develops this analysis in focusing on the main case study, *Di's Midsummer Night Party (2000)*, to show how devised performance and site-based production are used to challenge closure and "fixity" of meaning in gendered performance codes.

3.7 Churchill's influence as a playwright on a feminist dramaturgy

In and through her writing Churchill uses the resources (the theatre apparatus/system) as a means of communicating "the link between capitalist ideology and conventional modes of theatre representation" (Diamond, 1997, p 88). Churchill has influenced directors and playwrights by her utilisation of the theatre resources available to her She introduced the idea of overlapping dialogue (*Top Girls*) after writing dialogue for the guests at Marlene's dinner party with one speech following another. The speeches overlap each other in a way that is characteristic of the patterns found in female dialogue (Tannen, 1991). In this example she demonstrates the politics of female social habits at the same time as blurring the edges between her female characters to create a collectively recalled and retold story.

In her cast lists, Churchill creates a number of substantial parts for women (rare in conventional theatre). She weaves a complex web of research and theatricality to break the expectation of continuity and a coherent time/space relationship. With her ability to contest taken-for-granted boundaries of gender in *Cloud Nine* and time in *Top Girls*, she creates a historical dimension to the representations of gender across time and history.

3.8 *Top Girls*: Analysis

3.8.1 *Top Girls* research data

This analysis is based on the film of the play *Top Girls* made for BBC television

(1991). This was presented in a strand called *Performance*, which filmed a selection of theatre plays by a range of writers (both classic and contemporary) for television. For the purpose of this visual analysis I watched a VHS recording of the television transmission. In 3.7.3, *Top Girls* on Television, I discuss the context for viewing, and in section 3.7.4, I discuss how the Brechtian gestus and alienation techniques could be heightened in the television version of *Top Girls*.

I saw the original production of *Top Girls* directed by Max Stafford-Clark for the Royal Court Theatre, and this experience is drawn on in the analysis. The construction of the transhistorical characters in *Top Girls* and the cross-dressing in *Cloud Nine* have become a part of my own theatrical language, through the process of familiarisation that comes from directing these plays.

3.8.2 Phase one – Brechtian analysis

Act One: Cast List
Marlene
Isabella Bird
Lady Nijo
Dull Gret
Pope Joan
Waitress

In the first instance I analyse *Top Girls* from the point of view of the Brechtian alienation technique and the gestus. The analysis is focussed on a clip from Act One in which the transhistorical dinner party takes place, as this is the specific concern here, and no reference is made to the rest of the play. The analysis is contextualised with a description of the dramatic action and characters in this act of the play.

Dramatic action: Marlene celebrates the achievements of her guests

Please see clip of Top Girls on the DVD-Rom attached

Marlene is centre stage, hosting a party to celebrate her recent professional success, being promoted to managing director of her company. Her guests are composed of a group of women from history, who have all achieved "greatness" in their lives. They are Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Dull Gret and Pope Joan.

MARLENE	Magnificent all of you. We need some more wine, please, two bottles I think, Griselda isn't even here yet, and I want to drink a toast to you all.
ISABELLA	To yourself surely, we're here to celebrate your success.
NIJO	Yes, Marlene.
JOAN	Yes, what is it exactly, Marlene?
MARLENE	Well it's not Pope, but it is managing director.*
JOAN	And you find work for people.
MARLENE	Yes, an employment agency.
NIJO	*Over all the women you work with. And the men.
ISABELLA	And very well deserved too. I'm sure it's just the beginning of something extraordinary.
MARLENE	Well it's worth a party.
ISABELLA	To Marlene.*
MARLENE	And all of us.
JOAN	*Marlene.
NIJO	Marlene.
GRET	Marlene.
MARLENE	We've all come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements.

(Churchill, 1982, p 4)

The women share the lowest moments of their difficult lives before Marlene toasts their achievements. The different levels and definitions given of their success is demonstrated when Nijo says: "There was nothing in my life, nothing, without the Emperor's favour," and for Pope Joan her studies were her life. The women's grief and loss is palpable, the cost of success great. Although these stories are personal, they are given an epic dramaturgical structure through the use of Brechtian techniques.

Marlene says of her success: "Well it's not Pope but it is managing director," conflating the 1980s index of success (managing director) with the notion of religious success from the medieval period. Her observation encapsulates the "go-getting" entrepreneurial ambition of early 1980s Britain. The spiritual responsibilities represented by the role of Pope are reduced to the same level as financial success and being the boss of your own company:

> A representation that alienates is one that allows us to recognise its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar.
>
> (Willett 1957, p192)

The transhistorical guests are an example of the Brechtian alienation technique in practice. The characters are from different time epochs in history and by their juxtaposition at the same dining table a set of different time frames is foregrounded. The naturalistic preoccupation with temporal coherence is disregarded in preference to the demonstration of how the oppression of women by patriarchy is shared by women across history. The history of women's achievements is put centre stage, contextualising the achievements made by Marlene in her life. The action of retelling their personal stories in insistent overlapping dialogue constitutes a part of the

alienated content. Churchill's transhistorical alienation technique distances female experience from the spectator to recover these lost stories. This layered technique is focused on the spectator/performer relationship and leads to the construction of the gestus.

The subject of the oppression of women by men is a familiar trope, alienated in this instance through the transhistorical context of Churchill's characters.

3.8.3 Phase two – Application of gestic feminist criticism

The process by which the Brechtian techniques can be developed and layered emerges from Diamond's gestic feminist criticism taxonomy, where she groups Brecht's classifications for own ends, e.g. "Spectator, body, historicisation". Here she combines Brechtian historicisation with the performer's body and the role of the spectator, in order to contest the spectator's gaze and its relationship to the female body, suggesting strategies whereby this patriarchal trope can be revealed through theatre practice.

The transhistorical guests look forward and back through history and their collective presence pushes past the constraints of conventional gender meaning. It is their collectivity that alienates their individual experience and constructs the possibility of understanding the collective oppression of women across history. The theatrical costumes worn by the guests alienate (foreground) the historical content of their life experience (historicisation).

The alienation technique can also be observed in the characterisation of Dull Gret[27] as she grabs the bread from the table and fills her bag with the cutlery. Her behaviour is not only unconventional for a woman; it is also outside the frame of expected behaviour by people in a restaurant. Churchill uses the convention of table manners to foreground difference between historical periods. It maybe that Dull Gret's table manners were acceptable in the medieval period but here in the 1980s, they transgress conventional etiquette. This transgression alienates the conventions of the restaurant to distance femininity further from its taken-for-granted moorings.

Sexual difference foregrounded

The women drink wine and become inebriated. This conventional male behaviour in a public space (a restaurant) is used to foreground sexual difference. Male characters are absent from this scene and their absence itself allows the women to construct their own worldview, through their speaking out loud in a public place about the power and control men have over their lives. The stories are told from the female point of view in contrast to the normative male author voice. The overlapping dialogue "fractures the language of the individual subject" (Churchill, 1982, p 84), alienating the subject/object, male/female, active/passive binaries that hold gender meanings in place. The iconic female overlapping dialogue has the power to foreground gender by exaggerating its structure (faster and louder) within the gymnastic written structure provided by Churchill. Here female behaviour is distilled and exemplified to create a gestic effect.

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[27] Dull Gret is the subject of the Bruegel painting "Dulle Griet", in which a woman in an apron and armour leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils. From Churchill, 1982, p 4

Spectator, body, historicisation

The spectator's experience of looking at the transhistorical women is resisted through their costumes. The theatricality of the costumes signifies the absence of female representation in the theatre, suggesting that this costumed collective has the capacity to recuperate and create a feminist theatre semiotics. Their attitude is celebratory, a sign that again moves the women outside dominant patriarchal narratives. The theatre space is inhabited fully by their female presence, challenging the notions of subservience and passivity written into conventional female roles for the theatre. The covering of their bodies resists their objectification as sexual objects, instead making the body a conduit for an alienated gender critique. The practice of discrimination is given a historical perspective for feminist ends through this dramaturgical and scenographic composition.

Spectator, author, gestus

Churchill's writing is delivered from a specific historical position. Margaret Thatcher promoted individual success as the key to cultural and economic strength. Marlene is dressed in the royal blue (in the film for television) that Margaret Thatcher was known to wear at this time. The colour is symbolic of royalty and power. Marlene's costume emphasises her economic power as the head of her own company and an independent woman celebrating the characteristics promoted by the Conservative leader. In Churchill's construction, Thatcher's disinterest in the progress of women and culture is located and the writer's political standpoint on women and socialism demonstrated. The mimicking of male behaviour in the employment interviews at the Top Girls Employment Agency and the analysis of female success is closely investigated through Marlene's estranged daughter, who is cared for by her working-

class sister. These examples demonstrate how the ideological position of the writer to her material conditions and to the spectator is gestic.

3.8.4 *Top Girls* on television: The context of viewing

In the following analysis I deconstruct how the process of filming a play for television affects the process of making meaning, taking *Top Girls* as a model.

The following credits were screened at the opening of the film:

> Performance BBC Television and the Royal Court Theatre
> present
> *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill
> Produced by Simon Curtis
> Directed by Max Stafford-Clark
> 1980 Saturday Night

These titles are cut across the first scene, which takes place in Marlene's employment agency where she interviews Jeanine for a job. This naturalistic and televisual scene cites television conventions in preference to the theatrical conventions that open the play-text. The scene in the employment agency is between two women in contemporary dress, staged as a conventional television interview. This directorial choice contextualises the temporal frame for the opening of the play as contemporary. In the theatre the play opens with the transhistorical dinner party and moves through Scene Two (employment agency and Marlene's workplace) to Scene Three, when, in a contemporary and naturalistic setting, the story of Marlene's estranged daughter is recounted. The position of the transhistorical scene between two naturalistic scenes in the film for television has the effect of limiting its transhistorical resonance.

As the guests celebrate their success, the camera closes in on Pope Joan, speaking of her success as a young and popular pope. Isabella (camera tight on her head and shoulders) contrasts Pope Joan's story with her own dressmaking achievements. In this ironic coupling of female experience, Nijo confides that she spent 20 years walking through Japan on foot. This series of close-ups has the effect of separating the women's stories. The collective strength achieved when the women are framed in the proscenium arch is lost. The choice of camera angle directs the spectator's gaze, inscribing more clearly than in live performance a preferred reading of the action. In this case the individual stories seem to be preferred over the collective identity, the transhistorical identity of the women plotted in the script. This is an example of recontextualisation where the original play script is changed in parts by the director's shooting script. This development points up the convention in television for a single narrative in which the spectator can expect closure.

Marlene's resemblance to Thatcher is heightened by the play's transmission on television, where regular broadcasts included images of Margaret Thatcher at this time. The television apparatus in the 1980s inscribed Thatcher with a sign system of power and control, tailored to fit the conventional notions of femininity of the time. In *Top Girls* these attributes enhance Marlene's cultural importance. This process of remaking *Top Girls* for television affects the context of the production and viewing. Through the different history of consumption and production of television, the feminist content and celebration of women's achievements is brought to the attention of a mass audience.

Dialogue content

Some of the key themes covered in *Top Girls* from a female perspective are infidelity, illness, poverty, isolation, child-bearing, relationships with men and professional achievement. Women's achievements and losses are shown to an excess in television soaps and true confession reality shows, which focus on human tragedy stories. The pleasure taken in the process of sharing stories and taking people into your confidence is demonstrated by the energetic storytelling of Marlene's guests. The overlapping dialogue (characteristic of Churchill's innovative playwriting style) gives a chaotic mediation of the tragic content of the guests' lives. The status of the content is historicised by its location, set against the events in Act Two – in a contemporary time frame – where Marlene's loss in giving up her daughter, the cost of becoming a managing director, is recounted.

3.8.5 How the Brechtian gestus and alienation techniques could be heightened in the television film of *Top Girls*

Staging

The restaurant in the television version of *Top Girls* is purpose-built in the style of television studio drama, decreasing the gestus Churchill constructs in her play. The staging is not rooted in history – it has a floating and unattached feel. This creates a flatness, rendering the women as fictional two-dimensional characters. This television scenography silences the reality of the women's achievements. By filming the play on location in a London restaurant, it would be possible to historicise the staging. The historical signs of use and history in a "real" restaurant would give status through the architecture and scale found there.

Costume

The style of the transhistorical costumes worn by the guests in *Top Girls* contrasts with the style of "real" contemporary costumes used for television. The historical costume and Marlene's contemporary evening dress signifies the juxtaposition of theatrical signs against more realist dress conventions for television. Theatre costume, seen live under theatre lights, makes a different visual impression than period costume used for costume drama on television. The costume retains a "theatrical" look but loses the interest generated by costume in live theatre, where the *Top Girls* costume looked extravagant, colourful and captivating. The sumptuous display in the theatre celebrates the achievements of the wearers, but these qualities are lost in the play for television, because the texture and vividness of these splendid examples of historical theatrical costume are reduced. The opportunity for blurring the boundary between theatrical costume and real-world fashion is lost, reducing the impact of positive feminist signs celebrating female achievement. The rigidity and closed look of the television costumes are a consequence of the video format, which produces a visual flatness. In the theatre "distressing" is used to give costumes signs of wear, because for the Brechtian costume these signs hold historical significance.

Scenographer Pamela Howard recounts her conversation with Helene Weigel when, early in her career, Weigel showed her costumes designed by Neher, who had died in 1962:

> "What do we want the spectator to understand from this?" She (Helen Weigel) told me what a long time they had spent experimenting with the blouse because they wanted the audience to understand immediately its history that would not be spoken on stage.
>
> (Howard, 2002, p 111)

The importance of the visual text as a conduit for meaning is clear from this snapshot from a Brechtian scenographic process. For Diamond the "spectator, body,

historicisation" happens when the performer's body is also historicised, loaded with its own history and that of the character, and these histories roughen the smooth edges of the image, of representation. (Diamond, 1991, p 52)

The different roles played by these women can be read as a transhistorical metaphor for the mutability and changeability of female appearance. Their costumes would hold a different meaning if they were also transhistorical, meeting and blurring the boundary with contemporary fashion trends. In this way history would continue to move forward to meet the present, in the way that *Top Girls* can achieve in the theatre.

3.9 ***Cloud Nine*: Analysis**

I follow a similar process as that which I undertook in the analysis of *Top Girls*. A brief overview is given of the Brechtian characteristics found in *Cloud Nine* and developed by applying Diamond's gestic feminist criticism.

3.9.1 *Cloud Nine* research data

I refer to the script of *Cloud Nine* (Churchill, 1985) and taped documentation of Max Stafford-Clark working with students on the play[28]. I also refer to my experience as a spectator and director of the play.

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[28] In his capacity as visiting professor of drama at the University of Hertfordshire, for the third-year course I taught titled Acting Process, 1999-2001

Dramatic action

Act One of *Cloud Nine* is set in Victorian Africa, 100 years before Act Two (set in 1970s London). The actors double to play characters in Act One and Act Two, and characters from Act One appear in Act Two as ghosts or reappearances. These reappearances bring the historical characters into the present of Act Two and anticipate the arrival of the transhistorical characters found in *Top Girls*.

Cast list

The character of Betty, Clive's wife, is written by Churchill to be played by a man, as a strategy to show the patriarchal control that constructs the identity of this character. The cast list, as follows, is written in order to subjugate the family and household to the patriarchal head of the family Clive:

> CLIVE
> BETTY, his wife, played by a man
> JOSHUA, his black servant, played by a white
> EDWARD, his son, played by a woman
> VICTORIA, his daughter, a dummy
> MAUD, his mother-in-law
> ELLEN, Edward's governess
> HARRY BAGLEY, an explorer
> MRS SAUNDERS, a widow
>
> (Churchill, 1985 p 249)

This cast list is unconventional, drawing attention to the ideology inherent in the practice of casting. By reversing the expected casting for both Joshua and Betty, Churchill makes a strategic move resonating with the political struggles in the West for race equality and the struggle for women's liberation, which were both at their height at the end of the 1970s. Churchill peels back the casting structure in order to make visible the closed language of gender and race at the opening of her play.

The cast list is transformed into a subversive text through the playwright's instruction to reverse the casting from woman to man and black to white, upturning conventional codes of casting. This specification of gender and race is supplemented by the pronoun "his", to connote the ownership Clive has over his daughter and mother-in-law. The cast list for *Cloud Nine* deconstructs the power structure played out for the reader in the play-text and the spectator on the stage.

Despite her presence behind the proscenium arch, the character of Betty achieves visibility. The conventional proscenium-arch arrangement restricts the female actor (Love, 1995, p 275) because the history of the theatre constrains attempts to produce a space where femininity can be performed. In *Cloud Nine*, however, a feminist dramaturgy is created through the system of casting. The system of casting holds an important position as one of the dominant elements of the apparatus available to the writer and director in Western theatre. Casting is about the language of visual representation for the theatre. Churchill tears the inevitability of the conventional strategies used in realist theatre apart to reveal the ideology locked into the choice of actor to play a character and wear a costume.

The issues pertaining to the casting of Betty are enlisted here in the bid to develop gender visibility in the theatre. Churchill's use of the casting system is considered as a key contribution to the development of the dramaturgical categories.

3.9.2 Phase one – Brechtian analysis

In *Cloud Nine* the process of casting is alienated to show the social construction and

political position of the characters – a white, upper-class Victorian woman called Betty and a black male African slave (Joshua). The daughter in Act One is played by a doll and the son is played by a young female actor. The casting for the son foregrounds Edward as effeminate, devaluing female over male traits. Edward is sexually abused by his father's best friend and in this way plays out the role of surrogate female. The doll "playing" Victoria has no personality of its own and is treated with less care than a human child. Edward and Victoria perform the low social and economic value by a female playing the part of the lesser boy (Edward) and Victoria being replaced by a doll. The live female body does not signify value in this hierarchy of patriarchal representations. The choices made by Churchill in her cast list for *Cloud Nine* produces a gestus to allow conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances of the characters . It is in her rejection of imitation that Churchill manages to communicate through her feminist gestus the ideological coding inherent in the casting system.

Casting and the alienation technique

Churchill has enhanced the dramaturgical impact from a gender point of view by her intervention into the casting process, and as a consequence the power structures around race and gender are questioned. As she blurs the boundaries of gender: male to female, female to male by putting the body of a male actor into a costume coded by a tight waist, bustle and skirt as female, she alienates the process of gender representation.

> Churchill wanted to create for the audience an experience close to her own: at one point during rehearsal, she recalls, she had "forgotten" that the actor playing Betty was a man, despite the fact that he was dressed in jeans and sweatshirt and sporting a full beard.
>
> (Keyssar, 1984, p 425)

Interestingly, *The Messinkauf Dialogues* (Brecht, 1965) discusses the potential for the

Verfremdungseffekt from the point of view of the actress playing a man.

> THE PHILOSOPHER: If a man had been playing that man he'd hardly have brought out his masculinity so forcibly; but because a woman played him (played the episode, to be more precise) we realised that a lot of details which we usually think of as general human characteristics are typically masculine. When it's a matter of sex, therefore, actors must show something of what an actress would bring to the interpretation of a man, and actresses something of what an actor would bring to that of a woman.
>
> (Brecht, 1965, p 76)

A similar point is made in this section about how a child playing an adult can show grown-up behaviour and how class and age can be show through casting against type. The possibility for the distanciation process to take place is enhanced by casting that crosses a boundary for example cross-class, cross-age and cross-gender casting. The process of looking from the outside provides a new "reading" different from the conventional one and able to express difference from a new position.

3.9.3 Phase two – Application of gestic feminist criticism

Ideology is shown to be located in the body of this male and female character (Betty) by enlisting the *Verfremdungseffekt* for feminist ends. Diamond describes this use of the theatre apparatus as follows:

> Understanding gender as ideology – as a system of beliefs and behaviour mapped across the bodies of women and men which reinforces a social status quo – is to appreciate the continued timeliness of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the purpose of which always is to denaturalise and defamilarise what ideology – and performativity – make seem normal, acceptable, inescapable.
>
> (Diamond, 1997, p 47)

As a Victorian (married) woman and a mother, Betty plays the role that her husband and head of the household requires from her. The theatre apparatus as a system of representation is used to show the spectator how ideology reinforces the status quo. Ideology is shown to rest on the body of this male and female character (Betty) by

enlisting the *Verfremdungseffekt* for feminist ends. In Diamond's re-reading of Brecht, she discusses how *Cloud Nine* in particular demonstrates the potential that the theatre apparatus has for gender representation. She emphasises that the impact of theorising the workings of the theatre apparatus can have "enormous formal and political resonance":

> In *Cloud Nine*, cross-dressing that is not quite perfect, in which the male body can be detected in feminine clothes, provides broad A-effects [alienation effects] for a gender critique of familial and sexual norms in Victorian and present-day society. More to Butler's point, when (male) Betty announces, "I am a man's creation as you see/And what men want is what I want to be," she "alienates" (foregrounds) the "appearance of substance" and the "mode of belief" (ideology) that keeps it in place. In the gender structure Churchill is framing, the female body cannot even appear, only its masculine citation.
>
> (Ibid, p 46)

Diamond demonstrates how theatre practice works as gender research by her analysis of the gender effects in *Cloud Nine* through Butler's analysis of gender play.

Diamond says in *Unmaking Mimesis* that:

> Performance … is the site in which performativity materialises in concentrated form, where the "concealed or dissimulated conventions" of which acts are mere repetitions might be investigated and reimagined.
>
> (Diamond, 1997, p 45)

Importantly, Diamond notes that Churchill foregrounds the theatre apparatus through the cross-dressing and suggests that her strategy draws attention to the challenges of representation in the theatre.

3.10 Summary: The importance of staging to gender visibility

By applying a new analysis to *Ironmistress,* the role of exterior staging in drawing

attention to the relationship between domestic and public social structures is demonstrated. An overview of *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* is given from a Brechtian perspective, then built on by discussing the plays in relation to Diamond's gestic feminist criticism. In this way the Brechtian alienation technique is understood in a feminist re-reading through the transhistorical character and the cross-dressed characters in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill.

The process of staging scenes which are driven by domestic action in the exterior stage space is shown to be useful in foregrounding the relationship of the domestic to the public/social experience. In Ironmistress, the role of exterior staging and the use of fragments from historical texts emerged as techniques for making the historicised aspects of human experience apparent.

The transhistorical characters in *Top Girls* were shown to bring the achievements of women from the past into relationship with contemporary women, showing how the process of historicisation can be brought to bear on gender aware performance. In *Cloud Nine* the cross-dressed character draws attention to the conventional gender boundary to show how the construction of gendered meanings is a consequence of social discourses.

The strength of Stafford-Clark's productions of Churchill's now classic plays lies in his precise style of direction. The character of Betty (*Cloud Nine*), for example, speaks the character's lines without commenting on the gender reversal that has taken place in the casting of a man to play a female character. In *Top Girls*, the transhistorical characters speak with a direct line-by-line communication, applying

verbal actions[29] to strengthen their "in the moment" performance. The transitive verb assigned to each line during rehearsal motivates the dialogue and helps Stafford-Clark to work against the actor's urge to anticipate the upcoming events of the play. However, the use of the stage as an ideological practice with important gender implications does not resonate with Stafford-Clark, stage design being low on his list of priorities.

The surreal stage set of the play *My Heart's a Suitcase* (McIntyre, 1990), baffled Stafford-Clark. How the character known as 'Pest' could emerge from Chris's refrigerator, or could suddenly turn up to frighten Chris on an underground train with a gun, was a mystery to this otherwise 'radical' director. The sense of distance that Stafford-Clark experienced in this instance was created by a deliberate 'alienation technique' of a modern kind, created by playwright McIntyre in her surreal interior landscape. And recreated by designer Annabel Temple in her set concept for the Royal Court (with its stripped back stage and Georgian architecture). It was this set that created the scale of the play, bringing it from a domestic drama to an epic, prophetic piece of theatre.

Diamond shows how the principle of historicisation can be used to create feminist gestic work, as she identifies the sites where feminist gestus emerges, to promote a

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[29] In *Letters to George* (1989), Stafford-Clark shows how the process of verbal actioning works in practice, using the play *Our Countrie's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. Stafford-Clark calls his method "Stanislavskoise", and his practice of combining Stanislavski-based technique with Brechtian approaches - see *Fanshen* and his relationship to Gaskill discussed in Chapter 1 - has influenced how new writing for the theatre is written and directed in the UK. He says: "I think all good directors have evolved their own way of working, cobbled together like mine from things that have worked. I certainly didn't start with a theory, nor do I feel in the least messianic about it, but I do feel protective. I've never actually studied Stanislavski but I'm sure this is a Stanislavski-based working method. Method Stanislavskoise, so to speak. It depends on yoking together instinct and analysis and using them to plough the text." (op cit, p 66)

culture of feminist criticism. This example of a radical critical practice signals the embodiment[30] of feminist principles as a way forward for the artist seeking to make her practice political. The "ways of seeing" (Berger, 1972, p 7)[31] that emerge through Brechtian gestic language and gestic feminist criticism are double-edged in their relationship to practice (process) and consumption. The making of gestic work as a key feminist performance strategy is as important as the reception of such material, and vice versa.

I now describe the making of a key example of the practice-based research, *Di's Midsummer Night Party.* This project represents the culmination of the transformation of my practice from building-based proscenium-arch staging to site-based location. A description is given here of the processes undertaken in the making of this large-scale project. The attempt to analyse the practice and theory issues in this project led me to further investigate Diamond's feminist re –reading of Brecht to create the new dramaturgical categories. As I draw on both Brecht and feminist performance theories I have introduced the title: "Brechtian feminist categories" to express the dramaturgical categories utilised in this thesis. This term is designed to express the re-reading of Brecht by feminist performance theorists (Diamond, 1997 among others), who build on the alienation technique in particular to challenge the dominant gaze and facilitate the visibility of gender. In Chapter 6 I discuss the Brechtian feminist categories in detail as a major part of applying the dramaturgical categories to *Di's Midsummer Night Party.*

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30 De Lauretis, 1993, p 85: "I know that learning to be a feminist has grounded, or embodied, all of my learning and so engendered thinking and knowing itself. That engendered thinking and that embodied, situated knowledge (in Donna Haraway's phrase) are the stuff of feminist theory."

31 This classic text continues to be a valuable teaching aid in its broad introduction to the mechanisms enlisted in the construction and maintenance of visual culture

I then investigate social semiotics (Chapter 5) as a way into a deeper analysis of the cultural artefacts produced for this thesis.

Chapter 4

Di's Midsummer Night Party:

The dramaturgy of gender in this transhistorical rave

Please watch Di's Midsummer Night Party on DVD-Rom showreel provided.

This chapter describes the process of making *Di's Midsummer Night Party (2000)* from the perspective of the artistic director of Fragments and Monuments and director of this production. The live performance and subsequent screening discussed here are made for the public domain and are a part of this practice-based PhD. The practice-based research described in this chapter forms the central case study for the thesis.

I include extracts from my production notebook and the production programme from the performance. Fragments and Monuments, based in London, is a collaboration (since 1996) between myself and Dutch scenographer Madelon Schwirtz.

Di's Midsummer Night Party opened on 21 June 2000 (Midsummer Night) at Clissold House, Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, London. *Di's Midsummer Night Party* was performed in an 18th-century house and park and filmed professionally on digital video. This digital footage was cut into a 10-minute film to be shown one year later at the same location, projected onto the front of Clissold House to an audience including some who saw the live show in June 2000.

4.1 The personal is political

While I was rehearsing *Lovely Stones* in 1998, my aunt died in a tragic diving accident in the South of France. This accident prompted me to think about death and performance (considering the ideas of Roland Barthes, 1973 and 1977, and Peggy Phelan, 1993 and 1997) and to find a special location close to home for our next project. For nearly 20 years, key events in my life have been discussed during walks in the park that surrounds Clissold House, and Clissold House became the site around which to map and process these memories. The personal history woven into Fragments and Monuments' work is evidence of the feminist nature of this project. Personal memory is interleaved with popular culture, through this dramaturgical approach the relative status of the different elements involved is questioned.

4.2 The process of making *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, 1998-2000

Performers who had worked with the company previously, plus some new to the company, were invited to attend workshops and the initial devising process. The performers were chosen for their acclaimed strengths as text-based and visual performers from diverse professional backgrounds.

From Christmas 1999 to June 2000, Fragments and Monuments scheduled research and devising sessions in Clissold House. A spoken and visual text was devised through improvisation in the space. An information pack was distributed to the company, which included showreels from *Dogs Are Alone Too and They Live*! (1996)

and *Lovely Stones*. I outlined the starting point to the performers in a letter dated 28 November 1999:

> The audience are invited to a midsummer party at Princess Diana's parents' house in Tuscany. The guests discover that Diana is not present and that the Pope has been assassinated. Where is the hostess? Who are the specially invited guests, talking ten to the dozen (about death and injustice)? The starting point for your character is as a person who has received an invitation to Di's Midsummer Night party. You can be a celebrity, someone from history, dead or alive, or someone off the street. Your choice. Please wear something to suggest your character. These are inklings of character and will give us somewhere to start in creating the action and the dialogue of the piece.

Rossella Emmanuelle and Faith Tingle arrived in costume at Schwirtz's studio in Brixton, London, where they were interviewed (recorded on digital video) in their first "hot-seating"[32] session. The following e-mail was sent to Julie T Wallace before her interview (29 January 2000):

> We want you to be gorgeous at Di's Midsummer Night party and to be a celebrity. When we meet this week we would like to hot-seat you as a celebrity who has received an invitation to Di's party. Madelon and I will be in the role of interviewers for a newspaper covering Di's party.

When Wallace arrived she walked through Clissold Park looking like a star from a Fellini film – all decked out with a headscarf and dark glasses. Taking a comic, exaggerated role in the interview she told us that her driver was sick and that she wanted to be paid for her time!

Di's Midsummer Night Party was conceived as a performance installation to celebrate the new millennium. The piece is constructed as a distillation of the "fragments and monuments" lifted from the company's previous work and re-performed in a new

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32 Hot-seating is a process whereby actors research their character and answer questions in character, used in script development by Max Stafford-Clark and in devising screenplays by film director Mike Leigh

location. The text and plotline are a selection of fragments that hang together in a net of connections created by the company through research and improvisation techniques. The performance location is a monument: an abandoned 19th-century house of grand scale and proportion. A variety of visual and spoken text is performed outside and inside the house and these are of different scale. The performance outside the house is more monumental, whereas the performance inside the house is fragmented.

The production comprises the end of a party being filmed on location. The audience, who are guests at the party, walk through Clissold Park in Stoke Newington, London. As they walk they witness various events. When they eventually arrive at the party, which is in its last stages, the drama continues. We give the guests a glass of wine to help get them into the party mood and the action takes place around them. The following extract is from the press release sent out in the pre-production period:

> This cutting edge, interactive performance will transport you to a fantasy party in Tuscany. Enter a portal to another universe with multiple images and become part of the party. Will she ever arrive? Is that a photographer hidden in the bushes? Are the paparazzi filming you? Have a drink, move into the house, and see what happens next...

The following synopsis was given to the audience to read for the 2001 *Di's Midsummer Night Party* digital video outdoor screening at Clissold House:

> *Di's Midsummer Night Party* screening: a transhistorical rave
> Four specially invited guests and the hostess meet at Di's Midsummer Night party. Mary Wollstonecraft, the 18th-century feminist and solitary walker, has tracked the party down. Mary Wollstonecraft questions the power of photography and representation at the beginning of the 21st century. Bernie the hostess offers chianti from her local vineyards and welcomes the guests to her home, Tenuta Diana. Preti, a Bollywood star, brings popular culture and the paparazzi into focus. Preti bonds with Mary Wollstonecraft over their shared neuroses. Tolulu has brought a special song for Diana and we hear her rehearsing. She discovers the frustrations of time running out; she is ready to sing but loses her moment. Tuccia the statue, carrying a sieve to represent her purity and impervious nature, throws in the towel at the end by stripping off. We have multiplied Diana and left an uneasy gap for her at the party.

We hear her leave from the top of Clissold House roof by helicopter and the flashing searchlights suggest a raid or hunt to the death.

4.3 Fragments and Monuments: A short history

***Dogs Are Alone Too and They Live*! (1996):**
Devised from an idea by Madelon Schwirtz (fig 5.1)

***Lovely Stones* (1998):**
By Janet Goddard (fig 5.2)

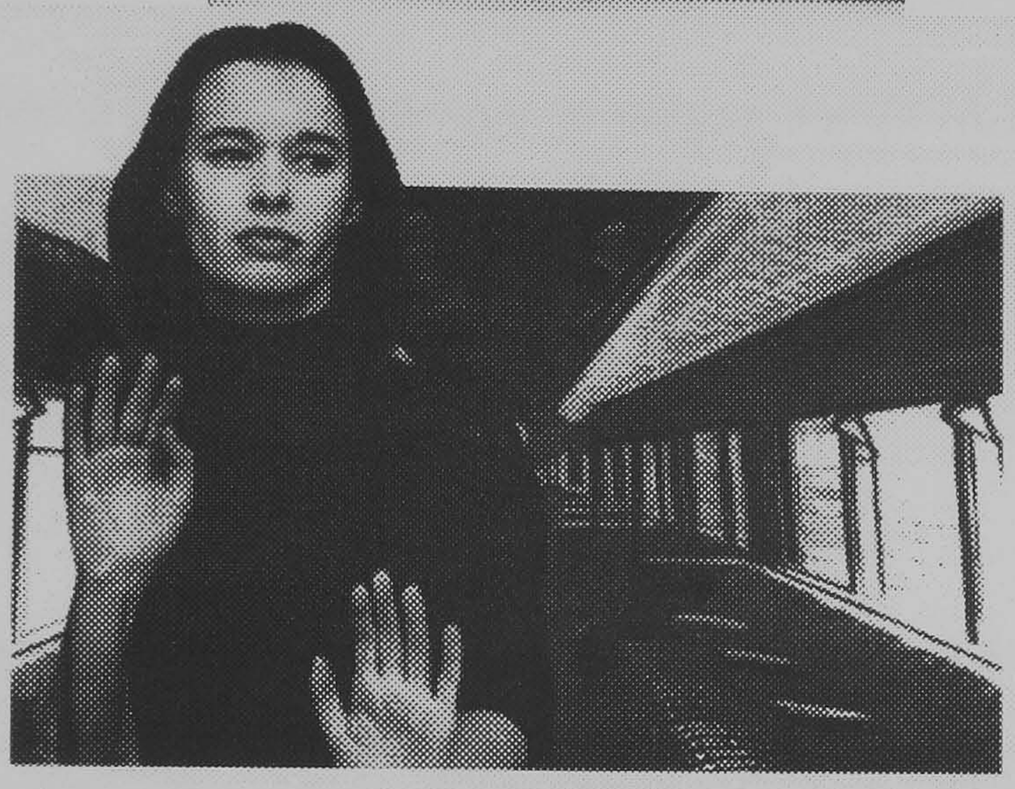
***Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)**
Devised from an idea by Anna Birch (fig 5.3)

The trilogy has three main themes:

Reappearance

The reappearance of Adela, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba (*The House of Bernarda Alba*, by Federico Garcia Lorca), Miss Julie (*Miss Julie*, by August Strindberg) and Princess Diana. The destiny of these women is deconstructed and rewritten.

Fragments and Monuments trilogy



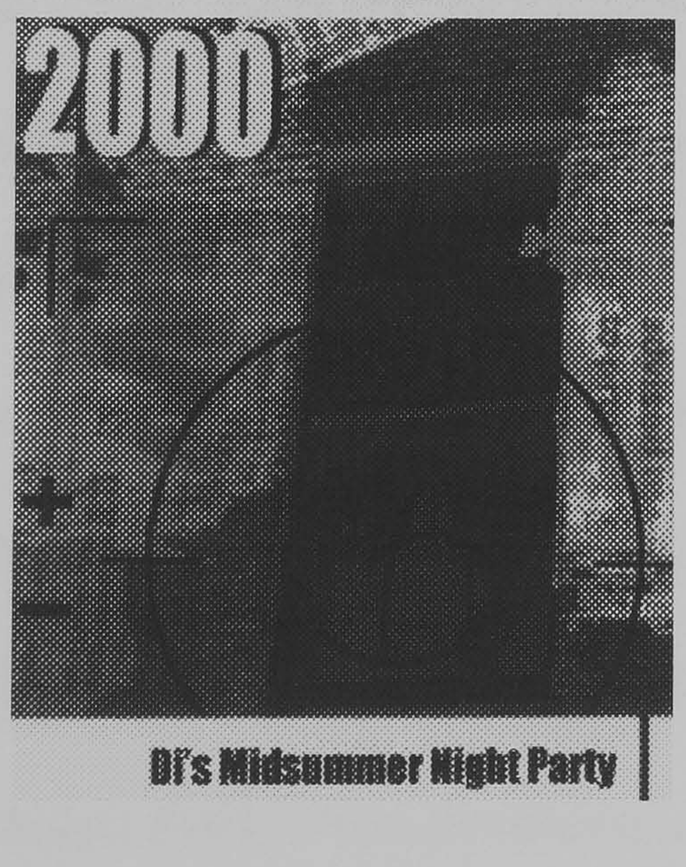


Figure 5.1 1996: *Dogs are alone too and they Live!*
Figure 5.2 1998: *Lovely Stones*
Figure 5.3 2000: *Di's Midsummer Night Party*

Interactivity

The audience interacts as passengers, hotel guests or party guests, becoming part of the action as they sit on the train, take the bus or walk to the midsummer party.

Interior and exterior

The interior and exterior of the performance space are explored as a central expression of gender relations. In this trilogy windows are seen from both the inside and the outside and doors are disregarded or used in a surprising way. In the outdoor screening of *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, we back-projected the film from the front of Clissold House (see fig 6) in an attempt to merge our 21st-century experience of the house with its history. By working in a site-based location, Fragments and Monuments opens the door of our work to the public.

As a part of a trilogy, *Di's Midsummer Night Party* developed the themes started in *Dogs Are Alone Too and They Live!* After the success of *Dogs Are Alone Too and They Live!*, Fragments and Monuments was set up to make site-specific work to explore the construction of gender through performance. By developing a combination of live performance, installation and digital technologies, the company investigates the interface between live and mediated performance. As the complex history of theatre venues militates against the production of feminist work, *Lovely Stones* and *Di's Midsummer Night Party* were produced in sites that had not been used for performance previously.

Clissold House, 1905

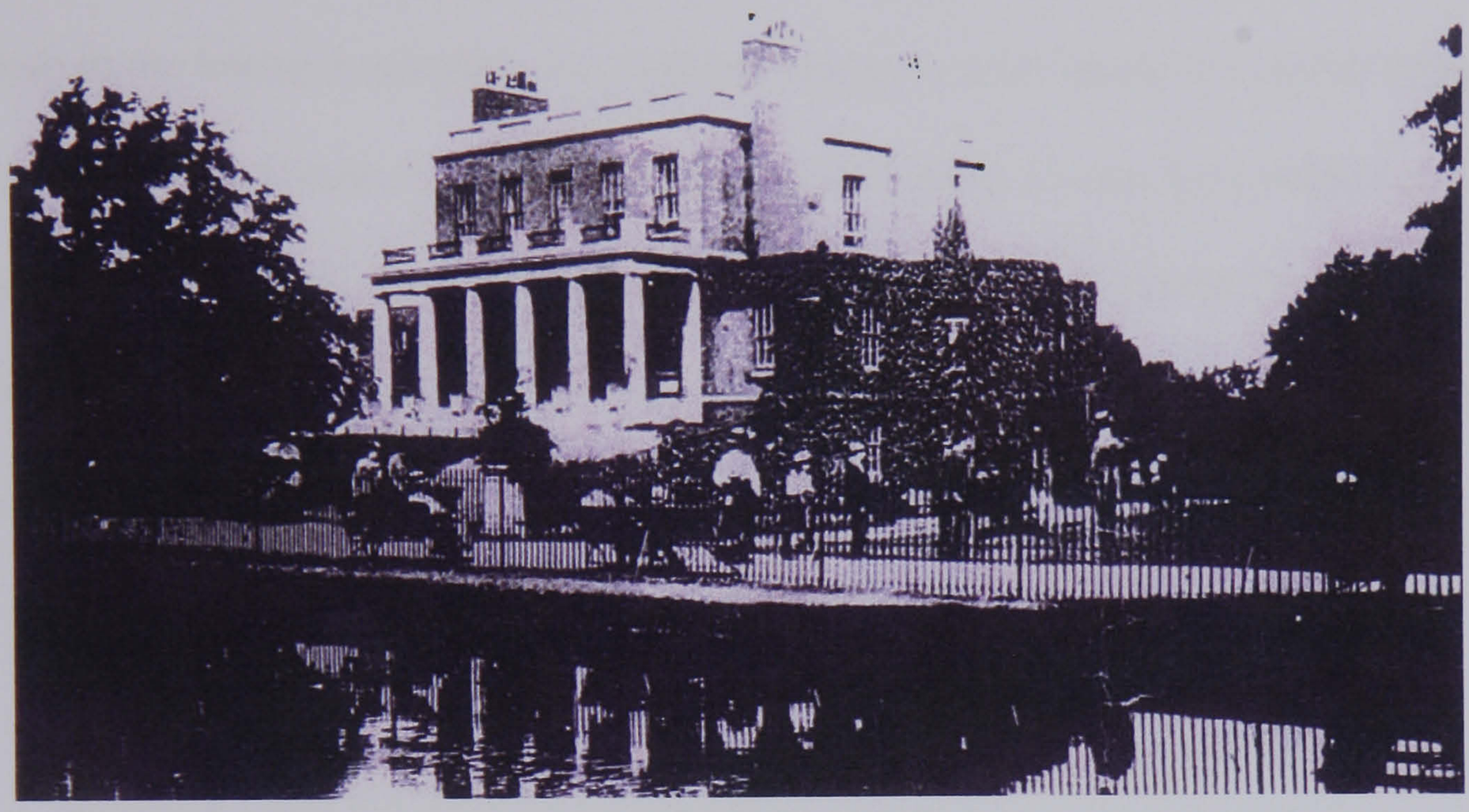


Figure 6

4.4 Clissold House: *Tenuta Diana*

At its official opening in 1897, the inhabitants of Clissold House moved, breathed and dressed differently from the year 2000, and as members of the Fragments and Monument company are from different cultural and performance backgrounds, their presence in the house instantiates the changes that have taken place in London culture. It is significant that Stoke Newington has historically been a home for refugees and artists. Pina Bausch, German choreographer and director of Wuppertal Dance Theater, pinpoints the creativity that this diversity can inspire, talking about her stay in New York:

> I think it was very important. The mere fact of having lived in a city like that was very important to me. The people, the city – which to me embodied something of "today" and where literally everything is mixed, be it nationality, interests, or fashionable things – all right next to one another. Somehow I find that incredibly important.
>
> (Bausch, 1996, p 56)

4.5 Artistic inspiration from new British artists

The company fuses high and low culture, popular and elite content in its work, resonating with New British Art and the phenomena of celebrity status. Rachel Whitread showed a collection of coloured resin casts made from the inside of a set of stools for the 1997 *Sensation* exhibition (at the Royal Academy). The interior of the stools became a monument, a standalone sculpture in their own right, and this work offered a new understanding of how spatial relationships can be interrogated. Whitread brings negative space or peripheral space into the centre of her meaning system to give previously marginalised relationships status.

***House (1993)*, Rachel Whitread**

Figure 7

For her sculpture *House* (1993), (see fig 7) a concrete mould was made of the interior of a house in east London and left to stand as a monument when the exterior of the house was cut away. In this way the interior of the house was brought to the exterior, to foreground the importance of the marginalised domestic space.

Tracy Emin (1997 Turner Prize runner-up) foregrounds her personal experience to provide a focus for the female artist, bringing her from the margins to the centre. Emin presents herself as a celebrity and relishes the notoriety that her work commands. She dresses as a celebrity (often in clothes designed by the British designer Vivienne Westwood, who mixes contemporary and historical themes) and exposes her private life to the media in an attempt to keep herself in the public eye. Her public persona becomes a part of her art and comments on the relationship of the artist to the media at the beginning of the new millennium.

4.6 Scenography: Scale and location

The geography of the space is explored and the borderline between the performance space, the non-performance space, the performer, and the audience is renegotiated in this work. The following is a transcript from an audio interview with scenographer Madelon Schwirtz in 1999:

> My interest is in finding my own language to describe the spaces I work in and use the architecture of the site to create new images. The space of drama is unlimited and the task is to choose how to frame it and accentuate those elements that enhance the dramatic impact. Just like on a canvas, we have to order and compose everything we put in space in such a way that it forms an interaction with the overall dramatic action. Just like a painting there has to be a constant relation to the limits of the space. These are the borders that surround real life. In our live performance the frame is unlimited and chosen through the spectator's subjectivity.

Hall of Mirrors

Figure 8.1

Diana Fragments

Figure 8.2

"Broken" Chandelier

Figure 8.3

The choice of location for the performance helps to distil and refine the work and can contribute to an increase in the scale of the work. Fragments and Monuments selects exterior sites where female experience is usually marginalised in which to site their work. *Di's Midsummer Night Party* was performed on Midsummer Night, which is the timeframe for the action of the piece. The audience sees the party going on in Clissold House as they enter the park. Clissold House has party guests dancing in partly open windows and loud music is heard. When the audience arrives at the house, they are ushered in through the open door to find that all is quiet, and the party has finished. There is party debris, shoes, drinks, glasses and empty packs of Diana brand cigarettes (fig 8.2). In the largest reception room there is a chandelier (fig 8.3), which has dropped to the floor.

4.7 Casting Preti: A cross-gender cross-dressing case study

Di's Midsummer Night Party attempted to investigate the processes of gender as a constructed phenomenon. The casting process for the guest celebrity demonstrates how gendered meanings are constructed in the theatre world. The concept of a guest celebrity arose from the work by Julie T Wallace to devise her character. Wallace, is according to her agent, "a large physical type" and is included in the character actress section of UK casting directory *Spotlight*. She came to recognition as the "she-devil" in the 1988 television drama *The She Devil* by Fay Weldon. Wallace as the she-devil challenged stereotypical representations of femininity. Wallace is a popular actress and as such her relationship to the audience is marked in specific ways. She is recognised by the public for her appearances on TV and is greeted warmly for this,

enjoys the attention and is not shy in attracting it. The audience therefore has some prior knowledge of her and we hoped to use this as a departure point in blurring the expectations of the spectator/guests in her performance as a "celebrity" attending *Di's Midsummer Night Party*.

Princess Diana, one of the starting points for *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, was a blonde, and it was important to steer clear of casting similar types in order to expand the definitions of femininity. The casting of Julie T Wallace as our celebrity commented on the "blonde bimbo" stereotype and offered an alternative. As part of the character development process, Julie T arrived to meet us at Clissold House as a celebrity who was struggling to keep up her status. She researched her character from friends "in the business" and included contemporary references to celebrity, such as charity work and sniffing cocaine, which gave her character popular appeal.

Wallace was unavailable to perform in the show at a late stage due to a fully paid contract for TV and it was necessary to recast. I discussed with her who might be suitable to continue the work she had started. She suggested a "large physical type" character actress who was sometimes cast if she was unavailable, and suggested the possibility of seeing men for the part. It is interesting that Wallace recognises that performing this level of excessive femininity might be a suitable job for a man!

Navtej Singh Johar, a male performer[33], eventually played the part of the celebrity attending *Di's Midsummer Night Party*.

---

[33] Johar is Bharatnatyam-trained, and I saw him perform the traditional dance of the Green Goddess, arranged by Phillip Zarrilli, at Surrey University in spring 2000

Preti to Benedetta Buccellato: "Where's the party?"

Figure 9

Johar was briefed about the nature of the project and was cast to play a female celebrity. He arrived at our first rehearsal wearing a wrap skirt, velvet top, holding a fan and he had his long hair loose. Johar has a full beard, yet when I first saw him in costume, this obvious sign of masculinity did not dominate my "looking". Johar presented a sensual and delicate creature who wanted to talk and meet socially and was called Preti. When the company met Johar, one of the performers expressed surprise that the beard was going to be kept. The beard became the source of comedy in performance and was used in a section with the fan.

In her definition of "a feminist mimesis", Diamond proposes a dynamic relationship in terms of how representation is produced with "the real" (1997, p xiii). She is not interested in mirroring reality, but in a relationship where representation holds in itself the possibility of change. Casting Johar helped the process of deconstructing gender construction, because the performer plays gender as a part of his performance vocabulary. Preti is intriguing and hides behind a fan. The fan conceals the lower part of Preti's face and this device sets up the question of Preti's gender. Preti reveals the beard on the spiral staircase, and is photographed giving a Bollywood screen gesture of glamour and sensuality: this is a man dressed as a woman being glamorous. This gesture is an example of how the expectation of meaning can be subverted, as proposed by Diamond:

> That is, by alienating, not simply rejecting iconicity, by foregrounding the expectation of resemblance, the ideology of gender is exposed and thrown back onto the spectator.
>
> (Ibid, p 46)

When Preti's beard is revealed, the audience laughs with the performer at the absurdity of the situation. Johar describes his experience of creating Preti as "in the

ordinary realm" (in an audio interview with me, July 2000), and it is this level of performance that bonds the character of Preti to the audience. The expectation of resemblance is foregrounded and subverted, and the spectator teased. The dignity and femininity of the performance is subverted when Preti drops the fan to reveal a beard. It is in this gesture that the fixity of gender signification is questioned.

4.8 Why Diana?-

> As the parallels between the character of Marlene and Margaret Thatcher mature, so does the play, and the general notion of the professional woman. The value of each female figure, mythic or real, will shift from age to age.
>
> (Goodman, 2000, p.xxi)

In Mythic *Women/Real Women* Goodman references the shape-shifting character in Churchill's play *The Skriker* to discuss how women "shape-shift" through history, and are used as mythical figures embodying special qualities in literature[34]. Diana became an icon after her death and symbolised a break from tradition, breaking the taboo of keeping her private life a secret, allowing the world to share in her high and low moments. The media has used Diana, as she herself used the media to express her frustrations and desires. Diana opened the door on her experience as a member of the royal family and revealed the inside of the royal household. This communication was facilitated on a global scale by the development of new media technology. Princess Diana's funeral was transmitted worldwide and watched by more people than any other televised event in history.

---

[34] See *Monuments and Maidens* by Marina Warner (1985) for her excellent account of how the female body is used in public monuments to signify attributes such as liberty, freedom and purity

Diana Masks

Figure 10 Diana: images of Diana masks *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)

I saw the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana on the TV at the McDonalds in Brixton, south London. I was working at the time in this diverse, urban community, making programmes from a radio van with local residents. The stark juxtaposition of high and low culture demonstrated by the royal wedding being televised onto screens across the world, including in public places such as McDonalds, showed me the possibilities of the no-boundary nature of contemporary life. This observation initiated a new direction for making feminist work whereby boundaries are contested through the dramaturgy of the performance work.

Diana's life can be read as a liberation narrative. In this version her desire to escape her oppression begins with her open testimony (shared with the British public) about her bulimia. I found a personal link to her struggle and my own history as a woman with an eating disorder. Her separation, rejection and divorce by an unfaithful husband mirrored my own experiences. Diana came out to the public about her bulimia and she sought help from feminist therapist Susie Orbach. This was an act that demonstrated her desire to take control of her life, and to step out of the vulnerable and passive role of the princess.

Artists have used the Diana phenomenon to great effect. In India, a locally scripted version of the life and death of Princess Diana in the traditional morality play form *yatra* played to full houses. The photograph by Alison Jackson, "Diana Family Portrait"[35], shows Diana and Dodi with a fictional baby and caused uproar in UK newspapers (fig 11).

---

35 From the series *Mental Images*, in which Jackson uses lookalikes to represent celebrities

Beatrix Campbell wrote a searing account of the royal family's treatment of Diana in her book *Diana Princess of Wales: How sexual politics shook the monarchy.*

> When her disappointment about something so simple as lack of love demanded sympathy, she was rewarded with "treatment". If not the Tower then the pharmacy.
>
> (Campbell, 1998, p 223)

Diana Taylor prefaces "Dancing with Diana: A study of hauntology", her article on Diana's death, with a memory of the funeral (1999, p 59). She was sitting with her daughter Marina on Sunday 31 August 1997 (as I was, with my own daughter also called Marina). She describes the repeats of the funeral on the TV and her "determination to resist this kind of identification", which she found coercive and humiliating. The royal family, particularly Princess Anne, was used as a role model as Taylor was brought up, as it was with me. As she says, now this Diana was being buried: "This was an odd mirroring effect – one Diana crying for another." Her personal identification mirrors my personal identification with Diana and personal losses re-played by the loss of Princess Diana.

***Diana Family Portrait (1999)*, Alison Jackson**

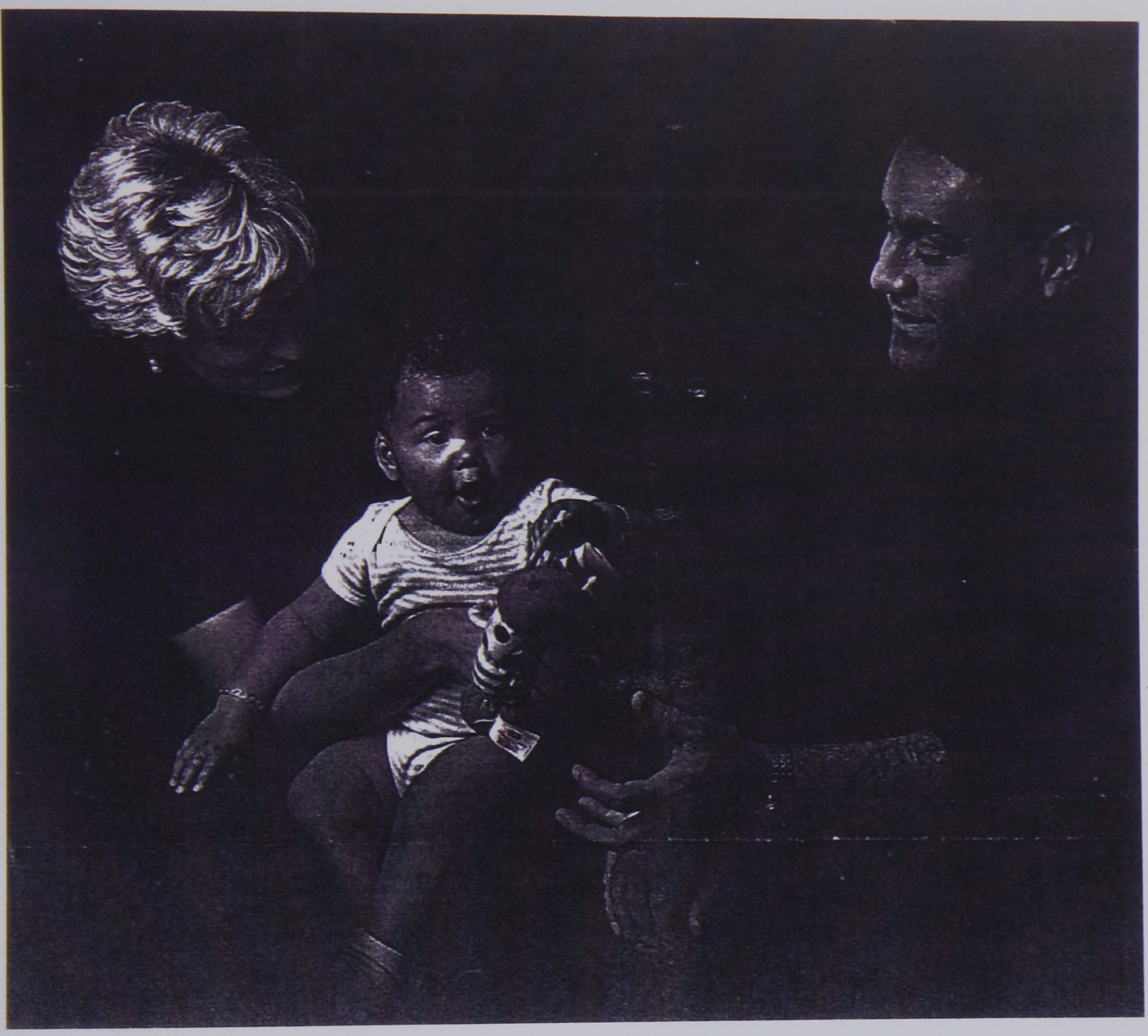


Figure 11

Diana's car in Lovely Stones

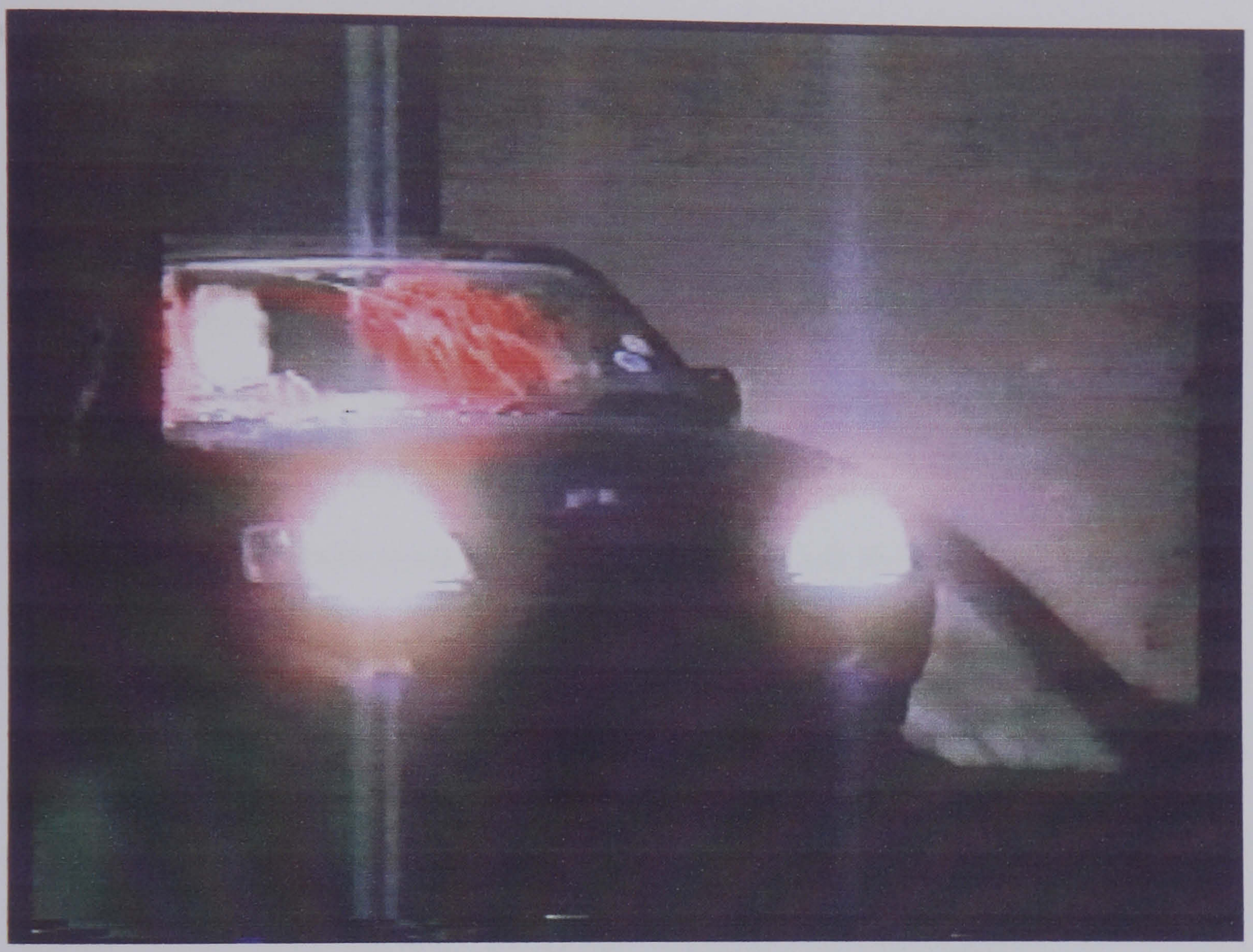


Figure 12: *Lovely Stones*, presented by Fragments and Monuments Scenofest 1998, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Site-specific performance on a bus and in a warehouse

Taylor goes onto analyse the image and role of Diana from a global perspective with illustrations of images, icons and murals that surfaced across the world after her death. She frames her inquiry: "I'd like to explore how globalism gets cast as universality" (p 61), and in conclusion suggests:

> Maybe it's not so odd that we, like the artists of the memorial walls may wish to insert our own icons of caring, knowing full well that the gesture will never be reciprocated. But always, there is the ambivalent push-pull of the imperial fantasy. The "DI" erupts in "DIE". These rituals of passing insist that we forget that we don't belong, even as we remember.
>
> (Ibid, p 71)

In *Lovely Stones* the character of Diana appeared as a young TV researcher making the story of her parents' love affair for popular TV. The last image of Diana in *Lovely Stones* is as a car crash victim (see fig 12): the car licence plate is DAE, causing members of the audience to ask if that meant DI or DIE (see above).

By creating a new dramatic universe the power of popular culture to make icons can be explored. Diana's death was mourned by thousands of people, mainly women, who flocked to Kensington Palace. This "performance of respect" pointed toward a new Britain, where cultural diversity and the role of women define the future.

> Diana was not given to using words like "semiotics" but she was a capable semiotician of herself.
>
> (Merk, 1998, p 106)

Salman Rushdie (quoted in Homi Bhaba's article "Designer Creations") suggests that Diana constructed her public appeal in a knowing manner, crediting her with intelligence and skill. Bhaba suggests she became a "sign" of belonging, a representational image that people could identify with.

> The contestation of regulatory regimes of gender is often central to queer politics to the extent that the social abjection of homosexuality, read as damaged or failed gender, is reworked into political agency and defiance. Such contentious practices, as Judith Butler's work has illustrated, open up critical spaces to retheorise relations between gender and sexuality beyond the causal and reductive ones posited by heteronormativity.
>
> (Bhaba in Kear & Steinberg, 1999, p 163)

William J Spurlin in "I'd Rather be the Princess than the Queen" (in Kear & Steinberg, 1999) celebrates the way in which Diana refused gender expectations to be dutiful and defiantly spoke publicly about the treatment she received from her husband. Her absence in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* celebrates her contribution in foregrounding the interior, private narrative of public position.

> So perhaps Princess Diana and Prince Charles broke the rules, boldly crossed the public/private boundary with their television interviews and intimacies they used them to reveal, but equally perhaps they didn't. More simply, in relation to Diana, we can note the wondrous mixture of forms of celebrity – sacred and secular – which she provokes.
>
> (Rose, 2003, p 206)

4.9 Summary

In this chapter I have mapped the process of making *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, starting from a personal stand point the work moves out to encompass a wider political dimension. The narratives drawn on in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* are multiple and include celebrity, Diana and destiny. Set in a location re-named *Tenuta Diana*, as a homage to the myth of Diana (both Princess and mythological character) to create a new space where themes from *Lovely Stones* are re-worked. The narrative in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* takes the script-based performance of *Lovely Stones* forward to develop the process of making feminist work. In *Di's Midsummer Night Party* the five performers devise their own script, in collaboration with the director and scenographer on location (working in Clissold House/*Tenuta Diana*).

As a consequence of "working on location" a work style found on film/TV locations

was introduced. The film crew followed the performers and audience as film crew and paparazzi, to create an atmosphere of celebrity and occasion for the performers and audience (both filmed by the camera crew). The film operators, both female and male, signified the relations of looking and the audience were asked for their permission to be recorded on camera, implicating them in the processes of photographic representation. The popular culture style of some of the dialogue is recognised by the audience and this comic language increases the accessibility of this complex work. Popular TV is juxtaposed against a found location (Clissold House/*Tenuta Diana*) and the audience identify with this dialogue and the implicit challenge it makes to high culture. The spiral staircase in Clissold House is the popular space where Polaroid photography, comments about clothes, entrances and exits to parties, arrivals at a party, vanity and meeting new people are layered, giving the visual and spoken language fresh exposure.

The edited dialogue in the video showreel of *Lovely Stones* and the short film of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* is condensed. This banner headline language creates a linguistic symbol with status and impact. The languages, both spoken and visual, become symbolic because of their juxtaposition in the historical space. *Di's Midsummer Night Party* therefore offers fragments of our culture at the beginning of the new millennium in exchange for the history we draw on from Clissold House, re-working the site in a new context as *Tenuta Diana*.

4.10 Biographies and obituaries

In this section I present and explain the choice of a number of specially created biographies and obituaries of characters, written by the performers to be used in the performance of *Di's Midsummer Night Party*. These were attached to the walls of the art gallery in the north wing of Clissold House and published in the programme for the show (by Fragments and Monuments):

> **Benedetta Buccellato (1947 –)**
> Daughter of Lord Buccellato, one of the most prestigious families in Tuscany and owner of Tenuta Diana, considered to be of great interest at an international level. The prestigious Tenuta Diana art collection is housed here, which includes some very rare pieces from the last two centuries.

Benedetta Buccellato (played by Rossella Emanuele) welcomed people to Tenuta Diana. Emanuele is a trained dancer who has worked with several Italian professional performance companies and with Pina Bausch. She devised her character as an Italian speaker with Di Sherlock (who played Mary Wollstonecraft), a fluent Italian speaker sections of the performance were devised to be spoken in Italian. By creating a space for Emmanuele to devise her character in her own language the fantasy location for the party (Tuscany, Italy) was constructed. Through this process the roe of language itself in performance is foregrounded.

> **Tuccia**
> Tuccia is an early work of Giovanni Mascaponi Moroni. The commission had come from the Compleci family in the mid or later 1750s and was brought to this house in 1790, it has "lived" in this house ever since. Giovanni Mascaponi Moroni was one of the many students who benefited from the patronage of the Compleci family; several of his works can be found in the royal households throughout Italy. Due to an excessive social life Moroni met an untimely death at the age of 36. It is suspected that his inspiration had come from Petrarch's letters (he specialised in Renaissance art at the University of Florence) as he shared the same fascination for the need for pure women within society; nuns and angels were particular favourites.

Angela O'Mahoney played Tuccia. I gave her *Monuments and Maidens* by Marina Warner (1985) to read as research in the pre-production phase. Warner investigates the representation of women through the female form as represented in public monuments. O'Mahoney had through improvisations found a statue character that could come to life. Through her reading she discovered Tuccia, a statue from 18th-century Italy, who carries a symbolic sieve in her hands. In the performance Tuccia moves around Clissold Park and *Tenuta Diana* (Clissold House), to transgresses the role of the statue as an artefact to be looked at. Her journey in the performance is symbolic of her capacity as a woman to create her own destiny, whilst carrying her porous sieve, a symbol of her fortitude.

Mary Wollstonecraft
18th-century feminist writer and mother of Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. Born in Spitalfields, London, but her father turned to drink after losing the family fortune, scraping a living as a farmer in Essex, Yorkshire and Wales. Together with Fanny Blood she ran a school in Stoke Newington, where she was soon welcomed by Dr Price into the local circle of dissenters. The school folded when Fanny got married. After a spell as a governess in Ireland, Mary was befriended by Joseph Johnson, who set her up with a job and lodgings. Her masterpiece *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was a fiery feminist polemic, railing against "the bitter bread of dependence", which kept women either "domestic slaves" or "alluring mistresses" in a time when they were denied civil, political and sexual rights. Her demands that women be restored "to their lost dignity and labour" prompted Walpole to call her "a hyena in petticoats". In her private life she opted for "tumultuous passions" as opposed to "the cold dictates of prudence", which led to a disastrous relationship with the American Gilbert Imlay, the birth of their daughter Fanny while alone in Paris during the revolution (which she also documented, her account forming the basis of Carlyle's *French Revolution* 40 years later), and a suicide attempt off Putney Bridge. She later married philosopher William Godwin and died a few days after giving birth to Mary (Shelley).

The obituary for Mary Wollstonecraft is written by Benedetta Buccellato, the hostess of the party. It is the only obituary in the collection of texts as Wollstonecraft, the 18th century feminist lived in Stoke Newington, London and ran her school at Newington Green. I approached Di Sherlock (an established theatre and TV actress and writer) to

play Wollstonecraft and after an initial period of research and development, Sherlock agreed.

Mary Wollstonecraft found the invitation to *Di's Midsummer Night Party* as she walked around Stoke Newington and that is how she became a guest. She is the solitary walker (her own description) and she carries on walking after her death. As the audience entered the party they were filmed on video. Mary used this opportunity to comment on the role of photography: as she asked the audience for their experiences of photography she researched this phenomenon, which was new to her.

Tolulu
The House of Windsor you will fall
You used me
Now I see
You took my children
And stole my Dodi
Oh my revenge
Oh my revenge

Charles you used me as a mat
Laid me flat
Then you spat
Camilla's my love
And they knew it up above
Oh my revenge
Oh my revenge

"Tolulu has a voice not from our time... a star was born and nobody noticed...
Catch her if you can... a night to remember." *Melody Maker*, October 1993

Faith Tingle had played Adela in *Lovely Stones* and she brought fragments of the *Lovely Stones* text into the final part of the Fragments and Monuments trilogy *Di's Midsummer Night Party*. In the early stage of the devising process, Faith brought passive and depressed characters to our sessions, and one was a blues singer who scribbled lyrics to new songs that always remained unfinished. We pushed Faith to create a proactive and energetic character, and she wrote the song for Diana, which

contributed a pivotal moment to the performance. Her song is about the rejection Diana felt and the anger Tolulu feels because of Diana's treatment by the royal family. The royal family becomes the dominant, powerful oppressor and Diana is the fighter and liberator in this text.

Faith got to the heart of the matter with her song, and as she performed it on the spiral stairs, her performance in scale. Tolulu Smith is warming up her voice when the guests arrive at the stairwell, and her sounds are primordial as she stands framed in the doorway. The image of Tolulu framed in the doorway of this empty house is a reminder of past glamour and decadence, and as such is reminiscent of a photograph by Nan Goldin or Cindy Sherman.

Preti
Bollywood screen star.

This short biography for Preti is intended to emphasise the role of Preti as the "pretty" celebrity.

Cross-gender characters

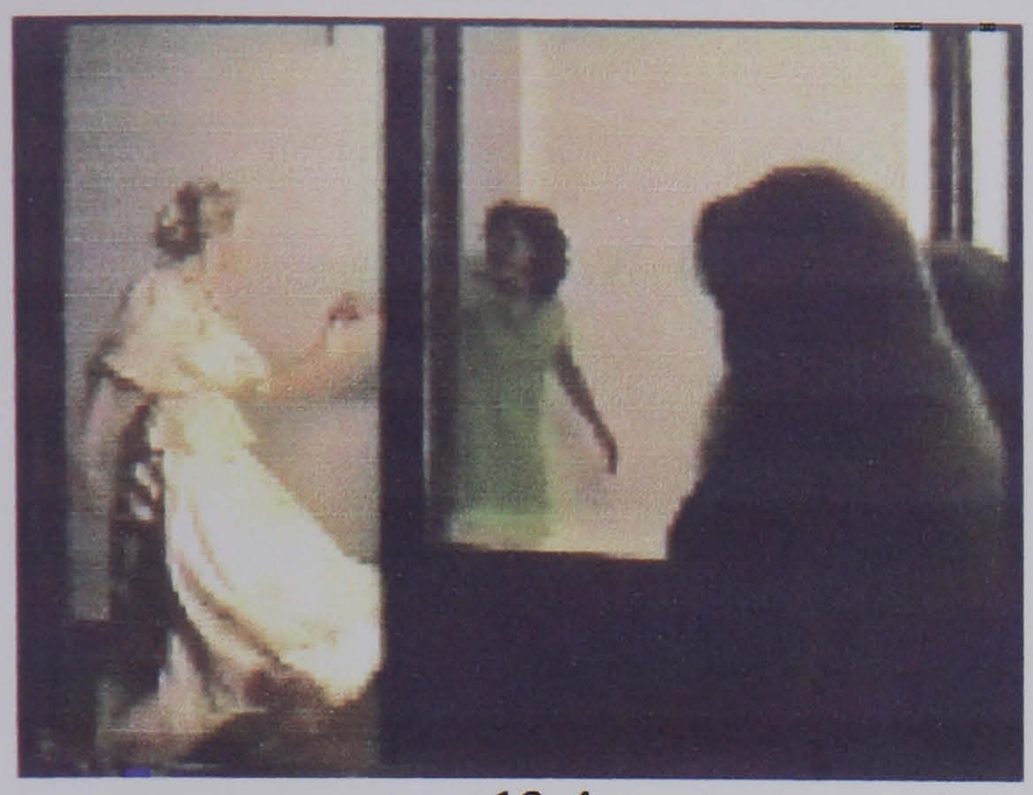
13.1

13.2

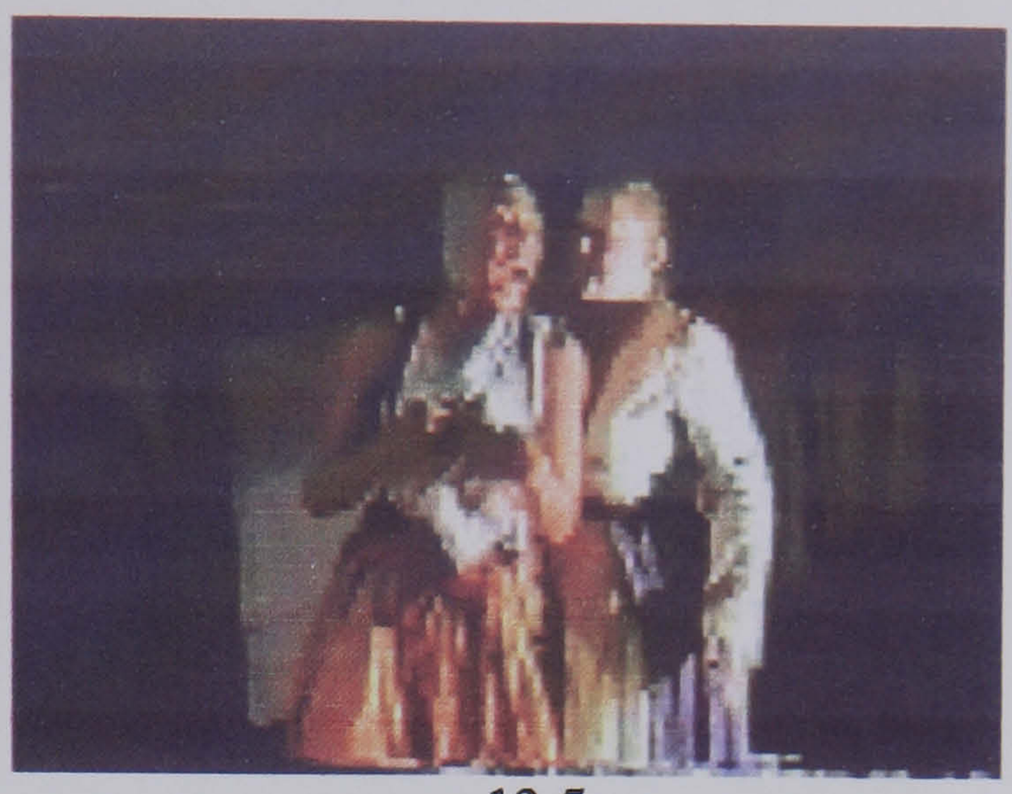
13.3

Figure 13.1 Adela as the Pope in *Lovely Stones* (1996)
Figure 13.2 Preti in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)
Figure 13.3 Preti and Tolulu *Di's Midsummer Night Party(2000)*

Transhistorical characters from four shows



13.4



13.5

13.6

13.7

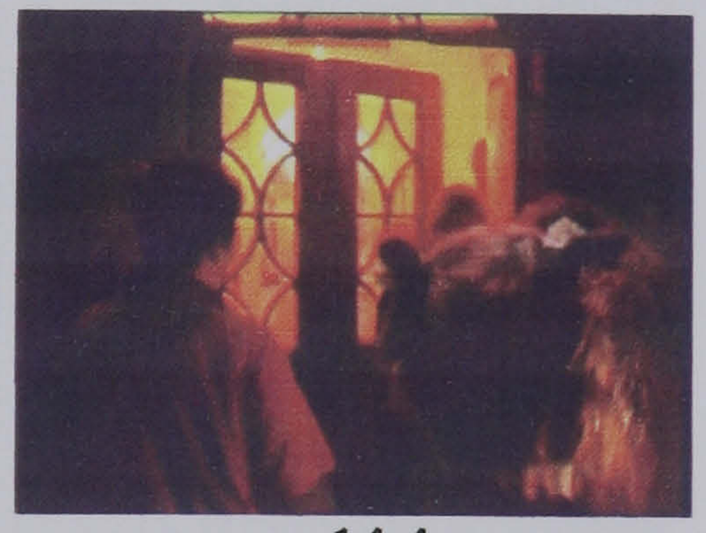
Figure 13.4 Julie and Adela *Dogs are alone too and they Survive!* (1996)
Figure 13.5 Adela 82 and Julie130 years old, *Lovely Stones* (1998)
Figure 13.6 Jeanetta Cochrane, *Cochrane Experiment* (2001)
Figure 13.7 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)

Interior and Exterior relationships: *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)

14.1

14.2

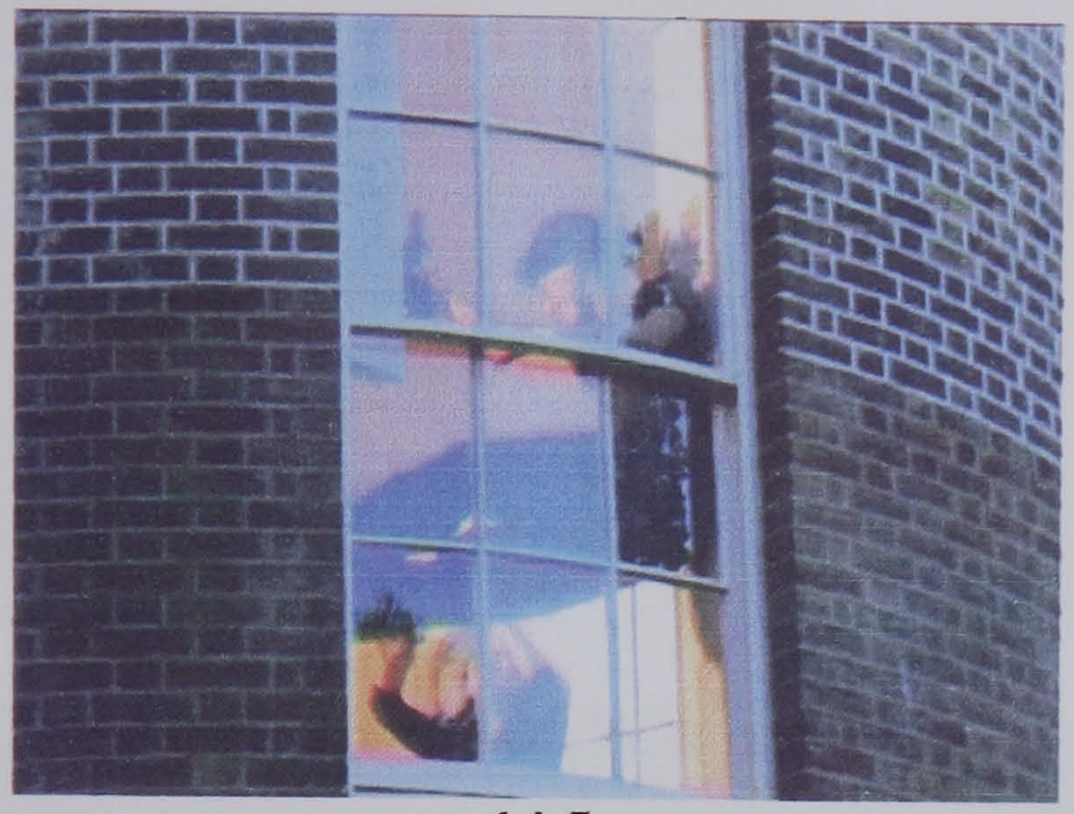
14.3



14.4

Figure 14.1 Clissold House, *Tenuta Diana*
Figure 14.2 Dancing Diana's framed by windows, *Tenuta Diana*
Figure 14.3 Diana look-alikes dancing in the window, *Tenuta Diana*
Figure 14.4 Back door, *Tenuta Diana* used as an entrance

Interior and Exterior relationships: *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)



14.5

14.6

14.7

Figure 14.5 Window interior/exterior view *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)
Figure 14.6 and Figure 14.7 Preti framed by the window at *Tenuta Diana*

Interior and Exterior relationships: *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000)

14.8

14.9

14.10

Figure 14.8 Tolulu sits on the spiral staircase
Figure 14.9 Tolulu framed by the spiral staircase at *Tenuta Diana*
Figure 14.10 Tolulu spot-lit looking out of the window at *Tenuta Diana*

Exterior: *Di's Midsummer Night Party*

Figure 14.11 View from inside *Tenuta Diana* as a helicopter 'takes off' from the roof of the house

Chapter 5

Social Semiotics

In this chapter I introduce selected approaches to social semiotics that I will draw on to analyse my practice-based research (see Chapter 4, DVD-Rom attached to back cover of this thesis and Appendices B and C). After the appearance of Michael Halliday's (1976) foundational text, new social semiotic theories have been developed by Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988), and Theo Van Leeuwen (2001, 1999, 1986) among others. The intention here is to discuss the relevance of social semiotics to my research and the significance of Van Leeuwen's work in particular. The development of a new set of theories by Kress and Van Leeuwen is an example drawn on here to help in the analysis of the cultural artefacts produced for this thesis.

> Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) see their work as valid for the broad domain of contemporary Western visual culture, as globally distributed through the hegemony of Anglo-American mass media in the world, albeit of course with all kinds of local accents.
>
> (Jewitt & Oyama, in Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001, p 153)

Their approach provides an alternative to the conventional models of theatre scholarship embedded in theatre history and textual analysis by providing a more inclusive, global perspective. The social semiotics discourse sets out to be applicable to a wide a range of art and cultural productions. Analysing the realisations of gender visibility as they emerge through the case-study (by applying a social semiotics approach) differentiates this practice-based research from conventional theatre

studies, locating the work in the live[36] vs mediated debate where popular culture and contemporary art forms are valued.

The different branches of theatre semiotics in the twentieth century begin with the Prague School (1926-1940). More recently among English-language contributions, Keir Elam (1988) developed an original semiotic method to analyse dramatic texts and Elaine Aston & George Savonna (1991) addressed key dramatic texts to demonstrate how "theatre as a sign-system" works in practice. The work of Patrice Pavis (1992) introduced in Chapter 2 .5 builds on Brecht to link the semiotic sign with Brechtian theories of performance. In *Semiotics of the Dramatic Text* (1994), Susan Melrose argued that the approaches so far to theatre semiotics ignored the physicality of the body, as discussed in Chapter 2.5 of this thesis. Her contribution has been developed in studies where the body in space is read as a key signifier of ideological meanings.

As said above, it is however social semiotics that is the most relevant to the analysis of this, practice-based work, and the concepts of "transformation" and "recontextualisation" especially are key. The concept of everyday reality and how it changes and transforms is taken up by Hodge & Kress (1988), Van Leeuwen (2001, 1999, 1986) and Lemke (1984), who draw on Goffman (1986), among others, to show how understanding the representation (Bernstein, 1990 and 1996) of social

---

[36] Auslander defines the status of live performance as follows: "The live is, in a sense, only a secondary effect of mediating technologies. Prior to the advent of those technologies (eg photography, telegraphy, phonogrophy) there was no such thing as the 'live', for that category has meaning only in relation to an opposing possibility. Ancient Greek theatre, for example, was not live because there was no possibility of recording it. (I would suppose that the concept of '*liveness*' as we understand it was *unthinkable* by the Greeks for that reason)." Quoted in Diamond, 1996, p 198

transformations is important. In his influential work, Bernstein argues that scientific knowledge, or discourse, becomes recontextualised to become pedagogic knowledge, or discourse, in schools. By building on Bernstein, Van Leeuwen and Hodge & Kress develop the reading of social representations in a broad range of multi-modal texts.

Decoding the signs of transformation, like decoding signs in general, has become less deterministic than in the 1970s, now incorporating the concept of intertextuality as key in the interpretation of sign making:

> Some studies of "literature" talk about *intertextuality*, the ways in which writing or talk (or any activity) can be seen in the context of other writings, or talk, or activities. The meaning system, through its thematic systems, both standardises and limits what goes with what in these ways, but those thematic systems are the product of all the talk and writing and activity going on, and they change.
>
> (Lemke, 1984, p 129)

Transformational processes are therefore read from an intertextual standpoint, which is the context for the transformation. The meaning of the transformation emerges from the context in which this action (the transformation) occurs.

> A text is thus always interpreted on the basis of intertextual relations and on the basis of relations with practices in the outside world.
>
> (Martinec, 2000, p 322)

5.1 Barthes, transformation and social semiotics

The technology of photography arrived just before the mid-19th century, and its seemingly uncoded reflection of the real world affected all (other) artistic practices and debates. The photograph was first seen as a mimetic representation of reality where a transformation was believed not to have taken place. Now this is not the case, and arguing about the nature of the transformation takes up people's attention:

> You know, I'm not a partisan of realism in art, or a supporter of positivism in the social sciences. I would therefore say that the photographer bears witness essentially to his own subjectivity, the way in which he establishes himself as a subject faced with an object. What I say is banal and well known. But I would greatly emphasise this aspect of the photographer's situation, because it is generally repressed.
>
> (Barthes, 1980, p 356)

In this interview Barthes emphasises the part played by the photographer in transforming the object in the photograph taken. The relationship between the photographer (subject) and the object of the photograph emphasised here points to the layered meanings to be found in the photographic text. This interaction between the photographer and the photographic message is the site according to Barthes where the social construction of meaning can be decoded.

Barthes has however emphasised the active reader and decoder, which in the context of performance has been built on by many theorists to shift the early emphasis in semiotics from the actor to the spectator, inviting consideration for role of the spectator in the production of meaning (see Ferris, 1993).

The photographic message

In the example of "the photographic message" (1977, p 15), Barthes deconstructs the photograph to understand the process of meaning making that has gone into its construction. In his example, people responsible for creating the message (staff, reporters, photographers, etc) and the receivers of the message (readers of the newspaper) are groups that can be studied through sociology. Nevertheless, Barthes makes it clear that a press "photograph is not simply a product or a channel but also an object endowed with a structural autonomy" (ibid, p 16), requiring a new analytical approach. The structural messages emanating from the photograph have a social role to play in constructing and maintaining the dominant messages of the society from

by trying to reconstitute in its specific structure the code of connotation of a mode of communication as important as the press photograph we may hope to find, in their very subtlety, the forms our society uses to ensure its peace of mind and to grasp thereby the magnitude, the detours and the underlying functions of that activity.

(Ibid, p 31)

Barthes stressed the social character of the photograph as a cultural artefact that is produced through an industrial process (the process of photography), which is different to painting or drawing practice. Despite its mechanical origin, the photograph becomes iconic in its capacity to communicate messages about the social construction of society. Barthes celebrates the mechanical nature of photography and its magical power to communicate the social:

> The prospect is the more appealing in that, as was said at the beginning, it develops with regard to the photograph in the form of a paradox – that which makes of an inert object a language and which transforms the unculture of a "mechanical" art into the most social of institutions.
>
> (Ibid)

In his visual semiotic approach Barthes argued early on for the important role of the social in the construction of meanings. The process of "reading" texts of all kinds described by him in Mythologies (1973) and *Image-Music-Text* (1977) precedes social semiotic studies where multi-modal texts are analysed to understand their role in constructing various representational systems.

5.2 Frame analysis: Goffman

Theatre and performance are the leading metaphors used by Goffman in his influential

text *Frame Analysis* (1986). He uses the role of the actor and the giving of a performance to dissect everyday experience.

For Goffman, the stage performer is

> an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offence, and looked to for engaging behaviour, by persons in an "audience" role.
>
> (Goffman, 1986, p 124)

He insists that performance only occurs in the presence of an audience. There must be a witness of the behaviour for the *frames* of the behaviour to be analysed. I use the concept of framing to analyse "what it is that is exactly going on" in stretches of performance.

Goffman is interested in the microsocial level: the interaction that takes place between people in an ongoing everyday way. For Goffman, social behaviour is constructed from these small details to create a "script"[37] written with the same determination as the author of a play script. Everyday occurrences do not happen in a random way; they are the result of social conditioning on the part of the "players" and the social context in which a "strip" of activity takes place.

> The term "strip" will be used to refer to an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them. A strip is not meant to reflect a natural division made by the subjects of inquiry or an analytical division made by students who inquire; it will be used to refer only to any raw batch of occurrences (of whatever status in reality) that one wants to draw attention to as a starting point for analysis.
>
> (Ibid, p 10)

For Goffman, the term "strip" refers to "an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of

---

[37] "a put together script of unscripted social doings, and thus … a source of broad hints concerning the structure of this domain" (Goffman, 1986, p53)

ongoing activity", which is then analysed. I adopt the term but use it to refer to an analytical unit motivated by the dramaturgical categories (for example proscenium-arch → site-based recontextualisation). This process makes each "strip" a unit motivated by the recontextualisation process in the performance research examples (see Chapter 6). My "strip" is thus rather similar to the "phase"[38] – a motivated unit of analysis (see Martinec 2000), different from Goffman's arbitrarily selected "strip" as well as from the technology-derived "frame" used in frame-by-frame analysis of cinematic film.

5.3 Social Semiotics (Hodge & Kress): Transformation and time

In this section I survey two case studies where Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge emphasise the importance of deconstructing the history of sign-making in culture. Hodge and Kress introduce the concept of transformation by the following example of writing a document draft by draft. The traces of each draft surface in the new document, and these can be decoded as the history of the creation of the document:

> …drafts which are transformed by stages, some of which partially survive to trouble the smooth surface of the finished text. These earlier drafts did not come out of nowhere. They draw on items from other texts, some of them recorded through citations and footnotes, others not acknowledged and yet others lost from memory. All of these texts had (or still have) a material existence. The *transformations* we are talking about here are not mysterious and intrinsically unknowable. But it is also the case that for most of the time we do not have available to us all of the texts that went towards the final text. We have to guess, to construct the history that makes sense of this text.
>
> (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p 163)

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[38] In his "Construction of identity in Michael Jackson's *Jam*", Martinec explains how the "phase" is motivated by lexiogrammatical and discourse categories (Martinec, 2000).

Traces of process reveal the history of the making, which in its turn shows how the construction of the artefact is provisional. This capacity for transformation processes to articulate the provisional character of reality is a key technique in postmodern performance making.

> Every act of decoding rests on the theory of transformations and some strategy for reversing transformations. A materialist theory of transformation regards transformations as social/material processes, linking socially/historically situated texts, in processes that have historically and socially located agents.
>
> (Ibid, p 164)

Hodge and Kress hypothesise about the existence and status of such processes; they assume that although complex, the processes are constantly *performed* in the course of everyday living.

5.3.1 First case study: *The Dreamers*

> What a precise transformational analysis of a stretch of language can show is a fuller set of possibilities for change than are realised in a specific social transformation.
>
> (Ibid, p 173)

By analysing a stretch of dialogue from the 1982 play *The Dreamers* by Aboriginal dramatist Jack Davis, Hodge and Kress show how the process of transformation takes place over time. These critics demonstrate with their application of a theory to a stretch of practical materials, that by analysing a stretch of dialogue rather than merely a single scene of transformation, it is possible to identify a fuller set of possibilities for change. In theatre practice, dramaturgical developments and scenographic visuals change and adapt during the course of a show. This accumulation of layered texts maps a series of transformations all of which point to developments of some description. By showing how transformations take place

through time and history this example demonstrates an approach to analysing change over time.

In this example, the experience of an Aboriginal girl is described as she helps her brother with his homework. Her interaction with her brother and her mother (a traditional Aborigine) shows how her home and school experience has been transformed through the history of Aboriginal "integration" into white Australian culture. Meena knows about English history, since this is the course content taught at school. Her knowledge conflicts with her mother's and brother's to show how her Aboriginal upbringing has been transformed through her school experience. Her behaviour as a school-educated Australian would fit into the school context – she would not be transgressing cultural meanings as she does in the home, she would be conforming to them. As Hodge and Kress note, the experience of Meena as a girl who has been transformed by the school system from her Aboriginal understanding of the world to the dominant white perspective may change through time. She may in the future take up the traditional Aboriginal position of her mother, or take on the values of Australian white society as her values.

The transformation point in this example is emphasised because Meena and her brother are close to adolescence, a rite of passage celebrated in Aboriginal culture. The dialogue between the family members shows the bigger historical struggle between Aborigines and the white Australian culture, and finally how the school context positions Aborigines from the white point of view. Meena is seen to move from hyper-correcting for white culture to returning later with her Aboriginal boyfriend. The historical context of contemporary Australia grounds her

transformation from Aboriginal culture to white culture, and then to a position (with her Aboriginal boyfriend and white education) between two cultures. Hodge and Kress note how both time and history are important: "None of the transformation takes place outside time or history." (Ibid, p 171)

5.3.2 Second case study: Wonder Woman

A story from *Wonder Woman* is used by Hodge and Kress (Ibid, pp 175-182) to describe some transformations that occur for the reader of the comic. Hodge and Kress analyse the comic frame by frame, by applying techniques similar to film and television analysis. In the first frame, the instruction "observe" transforms the viewing position of the reader from passive consumer to a subordinate position required to obey instructions from a controller. The position of the reader changes from frame to frame, getting progressively higher but less involved in the action. In the analysis of the final frame the reader is repositioned, giving greater intimacy and increased power to Wonder Woman. A female teenage reader, as a sample of the target audience, is given the opportunity to analyse the cartoon. Hodge and Kress locate their reader in her social and political position as a young woman who has benefited from the increase in equality for women. The writers of the comic are men, and as noted by Hodge and Kress, seem to have achieved a gender transformation "to occupy a female position".

Hodge and Kress ask whether the transformation of Superman to Wonder Woman reinforces conventional gender coding. They argue that the development of new generic forms coding new social relations is necessary and that this doesn't happen in

isolation. Social relations projected by a genre will be affected. The social nature of meaning-making analysed here emphasises the position of the reader/consumer in relation to the text, pinpointing the location of meaning making between the reader and text.

> Discourse is a *site* where meaning plays between participants in a semiotic exchange, whether this is speech or dialogue, comic or film, ritual or game. Discourse analysis, then, can reveal the processes which constitute such exchanges, where the social action of flow of time is in some ways especially visible, where transformational possibilities can be allowed freer play before being pressed into the service of history or its absence.
>
> (Ibid, p 182)

Locating points of transformation therefore helps in understanding how social action flows. A point of transformation interrupts the flow to demonstrate the possibility for change and is a reminder of the performativity inherent in social action.

5.4 Recontextualisation: Van Leeuwen

> Recontextualisation always involves transformation, and what exactly gets transformed depends on the interests, goals and values of the context into which the practice is recontextualised.
>
> (Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, p96)

The term *recontextualisation* is used to describe the process whereby semiotic resources are utilised in a new way and for a different purpose. In "Legitimizing immigration control: a discourse-historical analysis" (Ibid, p 96), Van Leeuwen and Wodak explain how the immigration system itself recontextualises the experience of immigrants seeking asylum. The decisions that are made in this process show clearly that sets of ideological categories are operating to restrict the access of the families of immigrants to Austria. These categories limit and define the process of immigration,

even though the explicit policy for immigration seems to offer access for asylum seekers. Van Leeuwen demonstrates the power of recontextualisation in shaping the ideology of decision making in this particular practice. His categories describing the recontextualisation process, eg deletion, rearrangement, substitution, addition (Van Leeuwen, 1993 and 1995; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) point to the kinds of activities that comprise the recontextualisation process.

Van Leeuwen's application of the term recontextualisation is useful because he applies the term to a wide social context. I extended Van Leeuwen's use of the concept to explore how gendered meanings shift as the representations of gender are recontextualised in my practice. The recontextualisation process can be observed as the work moves further away from the theatre, building in a series of recontextualisations. These recontextualisations have a common characteristic. In each recontextualisation the context is further exteriorised to activate new gendered readings.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed some aspects of social semiotics and their application to the analysis of the performance research. I have surveyed the main literary sources built on to construct the original theoretical spine for this thesis.

In Chapter 6, I select terms drawn from the survey of social semiotics in this chapter and from the performance theory discussed in Chapter 3. In particular, I have taken

the concept of recontextualisation and applied it to the practice-based research. The project itself (*Di's Midsummer Night Party)* was described in Chapter 4. Chapter 6 opens with a definition of my own interdisciplinary analytic language drawn from social semiotics and selected theories of performance. A new unit of analysis is described (derived from Goffman, 1986, and Martinec, 2000) which I apply in combination with selected concepts from social semiotics (taken from Hodge & Kress, 1988, and Van Leeuwen, 2001, 1999, 1986). The dramaturgical categories are applied to this new unit of analysis. Chapter 3 argues for the potential of transhistorical character, cross-dressing and domestic/public use of space drawn from directing *Ironmistress* (April de Angelis), *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* (Caryl Churchill) to challenge the dominant gaze and to facilitate gender visibility. In Chapter 6 these three approaches to performance practice are assembled under the heading: Brechtian feminist categories. This heading conveys the contribution made by Brecht and the re-working of his theories in feminist performance practice as evidenced in the performance work presented here and other notable examples such as *Dress Suits for Hire* discussed in Chapter 2.

The analysis further benefits from my own history as a theatre director; for instance, my discovery of the potency of the exterior space is useful to my analysis and subsequent conclusions.

Chapter 6

Analysis of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* Utilising an Original Set of Dramaturgical Categories

6.1 Development of the dramaturgical categories

Di's Midsummer Night Party, as described in Chapter 4, is a live, site-based, devised show instantiating a non-traditional use of theatrical resources. A conventional use of theatrical resources might be observed in the proscenium-arch theatre, which has been argued here to be a type of site where normative values are generated and maintained (see Chapter 1). In her attempt to "unmake mimesis", Diamond argues that the performance text framed by the proscenium arch creates a set of meanings that reflect the history of theatre, emphasising in particular the importance of how gender is staged and cited (1997, p46). The process of mimesis has a naturalising effect on the taken-for-granted assumptions about gender (female-passive, male-active, female-interior domestic space, male-exterior public space, for example), reinforcing the patriarchal ideology of the conventional proscenium-arch theatre. Diamond emphasises that "arrangement" in realist drama – in this case the proscenium arch supports the construction of dominant meanings and ideology. As discussed in Chapter 5 and applied in this chapter, the process of recontextualisation (Van Leeuwen, 2001, 1999, 1986) in feminist performance can draw attention to gendered representations.

As introduced in Chapter 3 and 5 the term Brechtian feminist category is developed here to describe three dramaturgical categories that, as has been argued in Chapter 3 draw attention to gender visibility in feminist performance. Diamond (1997) has demonstrated and argued for transhistorical character and cross-dressing to be considered as aspects of gestic feminist criticism. She shows how the approach to character evidenced in Churchill's plays *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* alienates the spectator's gaze to facilitate visibility or a different way of seeing. The application of the alienation technique in a feminist performance context, she argues makes the gendered sign system visible (Diamond, 1997, p 47). I have added a third term: "domestic/public use of space" to articulate the relationship between the interior/exterior space boundary as argued for in Chapter 3 and applied in the "strip" analysis. The dramaturgical categories above are organised under the heading Brechtian feminist categories in the "strip" analysis of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* that follows.

In the analysis I take "strips" (after Goffman, 1986, and Martinec, 2000) of recorded dramatic action from *Di's Midsummer Night Party* . Each recontextualisation motivates a "strip" and is realised by blurring certain boundaries (eg. audience/performer, past/present clothing). This draws attention to the Brechtian feminist categories (transhistorical character, cross-dressed character, domestic/public use of space) which facilitate gender visibility. The blurred boundaries and their effect of drawing attention to the Brechtian feminist categories are recorded in the "strip" analysis below and the DVD-Rom attached to this submission. The DVD-Rom shows four motivated strips (QuickTime movies) from *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2001) side-by-side with the written analysis.

The Brechtian feminist categories (cf also Chapter 3) are:

Transhistorical character

Cross-dressed character

Domestic/public use of space

The following recontextualisations draw attention to the Brechtian feminist categories that challenge the dominant gaze and facilitate the visibility of gender.

Proscenium arch-based performance → Site-based performance

Script-based performance → Devised performance

Live performance → Filmed performance

Filmed performance → Projection of filmed performance

A series of "strips" from *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (see DVD-Rom attached) is analysed by applying the categories above. A summary of the categories used to analyse each "strip" follows:

Strip 1:

Proscenium arch-based performance → Site-based performance recontextualisation

Script-based performance → Devised performance recontextualisation

are realised by the blurred boundaries of audience/performer, present/past clothing, present/past location, interior/exterior boundary, actor/script, to draw attention to transhistorical character and domestic/public use of space

Strip 2:

Proscenium arch-based performance → Site-based performance recontextualisation

Script-based performance → Devised performance recontextualisation

are realised by the blurred boundaries of male/female clothing, audience /performer, to draw attention to cross-dressed character

Strip 3:

Live performance → Filmed performance recontextualisation

is realised by the blurred boundaries of male gaze/female gaze, reality/dream, audience/performer, to draw attention to cross-dressed and transhistorical characters

Strip 4:

Filmed performance → Projection of filmed performance recontextualisation

is realised by the blurred boundaries of interior/exterior boundary, to draw attention to domestic/public use of space

6.2 Analysis of *Di's Midsummer Night Party*

Please watch the film Di's Midsummer Night Party *and study the "strip" analysis on the DVD-Rom attached.*

Strip 1

Proscenium-arch performance → Site-based performance recontextualisation

is realised by blurred boundaries: audience/performer, present/past clothing, present/past location, interior/exterior boundary
to draw attention to: transhistorical character and domestic/public use of space

Audience /performer boundary blurred: Mary Wollstonecraft, like the audience, holds a glass of red wine and interacts with them, and so helps the process of creating the transhistorical link between this character and the audience. The interaction of Wollstonecraft with the party guests (audience) is only possible in site-based performance, and the event draws attention to her transhistorical character.

Present/past clothing boundary blurred: Mary Wollstonecraft is wearing a costume that suggests 18th-century English attire and contemporary fashion. Wollstonecraft's relationship to historical and contemporary experience is further blurred by the use of

a corset bought from a high street store worn as a bodice, mixed with breeches and boots hired from a theatrical costume supplier. Her costume signifies a fusion of contemporary and historical dress codes and is worn offstage, in a public park where the audience are wearing everyday clothes. This juxtaposition of clothes from different historical eras draws attention to the differences in the audience timeframe and the transhistorical character timeframe in a way that cannot be achieved in proscenium-arch theatre.

Present/past location boundary blurred: The grand 18th-century house is set against the contemporary play park fence, brick building and garden border are familiar central London park views. Wollstonecraft's presence in relation to these contemporary signs helps to contextualise the house in its original era, blurring thus the boundaries of the present and the past and drawing attention to her transhistorical character.

Interior/exterior boundary blurred: The Italian party guests (extras) have a ghetto blaster and a newspaper, both objects whose place is more often inside than outside the house. Because the Italian party guests are outside the house, this draws attention to the domestic/public use of space of the performance. The relationship of the objects to the domestic space encourages gender visibility to emerge. The conventional, domestic female space of the interior is brought into the public, exterior space by these objects.

Script-based performance → Devised performance recontextualisation

is realised by blurred boundaries: actor/script, audience/performer
to draw attention to: transhistorical character

Actor/script boundary blurred: The blurred actor/script boundary draws attention to Wollstonecraft's transhistorical character. The relationship of the actor Di Sherlock to her performance material is recontextualised from the conventional relationship of the actor in script-based performance by the devising process undertaken here (described in Chapter 4). The process of devising this transhistorical character recontextualises her from the proscenium arch-type characters found in *Top Girls* to a devised character whose performance is drawn from and staged in a site-based location.

Sherlock's responsibility for research and development extends her embodied performance to blur the boundary between her "self" and her character and her character and the audience. She was encouraged to bring aspects of herself to bear on the performance, and to that end her experience as a female writer[39] in a male-dominated culture was discussed in the research phase. She chose to wear her own coat and to carry a writer's pen in her décolletage to signify ownership of the role of the woman writer in her everyday life. Through the devising process Sherlock links herself as a contemporary writer to the role of women writers across history. The transhistorical relationship of women writers across history embodied by Wollstonecraft recharges outworn notions of passivity, gender and the female writer.

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[39] See Brecht's discussion of the A-effect: "There's no A-effect when the actor adopts another's facial expression at the cost of erasing his own. What he should do is to show the two faces overlapping." (1965, p 76)

Through the devising process Sherlock created Wollstonecraft as an Italian[40] speaker. The blurred language boundary – English to Italian, Italian to English – draws attention to the performer's communication with the audience (as discussed in Chapter 4 and in Appendix B). The use of more than one language draws attention to the role of language in the creation and maintenance of gendered representations across history.

Audience/performer boundary blurred: Wollstonecraft joins the guests on their journey to the party in the house and speaks to them as they walk. Her improvised performance blurs the boundary between the character of Wollstonecraft, the actor Sherlock and the audience. Her style is informal and friendly but in control, demonstrating the skill of networking and putting people at their ease that characterises female behaviour (Tannen, 1991, p 39). Her style of social interaction foregrounds a particular style of female behaviour in an unconventional relationship for the audience to celebrate unconventional female achievement. The interaction between Wollstonecraft and the audience draws attention to the richness that comes from the historical importance of Wollstonecraft and Sherlock's skill as a performer in bringing her character to life.

Wollstonecraft looks at *Tenuta Diana*, where the temporal frame of the show performed at 9pm and 11pm in June 2000 is alienated by her simulated 18th century-like presence. Wollstonecraft lived in the same neighborhood[41] as Clissold House in the 18th century, and she relates to the audience as if they shared the same timeframe,

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40 In the Lethaby Gallery performance of *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, 1996, Swedish and Spanish languages were woven into the English dialogue

41 Wollstonecraft managed a school for girls at Newington Green

alienating her character in the Brechtian use of the term.

Strip 2

Proscenium-arch performance → Site-based performance recontextualisation

is realised by blurred boundaries: audience/performer
to draw attention to: cross-dressed character

Audience/performer boundary blurred: The spiral staircase in Clissold House (*Tenuta Diana*) is a feature with materiality and history used here to show how gender visibility can be enhanced by site-based work. Located in an abandoned house in need of repair, the spiral staircase as a site challenges the conventional meanings associated with the audience and performer boundary where the dominant gaze is enacted.

The spiral staircase as a public space recontextualises Preti and helps to push the character towards the audience, blurring the relationship between audience and performer. Preti shouts to someone upstairs: "Is the party upstairs?" The grand spiral staircase frames Preti, holding his/her skirts carefully, emphasising an extended dancer's back. As Preti turns to come down the stairs, he uses the frame created by the staircase to maximum effect to achieve glamorous impact blurring gendered codes. The recontextualisation from proscenium-arch performance to site-based performance thus draws attention to the cross-dressed character.

Script-based performance → Devised performance recontextualisation

is realised by blurred boundaries: male/female clothing, audience/performer
to draw attention to: cross-dressed character

Male/female clothing boundary blurred: The character of Preti was developed

through hot-seating by Johar, who dressed as a celebrity at our first research and development meeting. Preti wore a sarong and red velvet jacket, blurring the gendered signs of dress to draw attention to the possibility of ambiguous gendered meanings.

Audience/performer boundary blurred: Preti's arrival is staged to mirror the arrival of a popular celebrity. Johar, playing Preti, uses his trained dancer's body and experience of street theatre to investigate sexuality and gender with the party guests, questioning the personal prejudices of the audience through an embodied physicality and improvised dialogue.

In this "strip" questions about the representation of gender are cited through the relationship between Preti and Tolulu and between the performers and the audience. As Tolulu exits to find Pepe, she bumps into Preti, who is making an entrance for the first time. Tolulu greets Preti: "You look absolutely gorgeous!" Preti is seen from the back, gliding into the stairwell with the audience looking on in admiration. Preti's performance, although rehearsed, is partly improvised building an intimate relationship to the audience where their participation in the form of ad hoc comments and laughter is invited. This blurred boundary between the audience and the performer, possible only in devised performance creates a space of uncertainty where the audience and the performer participate together to produce meaning. Preti challenges the stereotypical representations of femininity and celebrity, drawing attention to their dominant role in maintaining the normative power relations of female/passive/submissive and male/active/dominant behaviour.

In her discussion (see Chapter 2.1) about the over representation of femininity in popular culture Phelan (Phelan, 1993, p10) jokes that young white women would be in control if instances of representation were used as an index of power. Preti was cast to devise and perform an alternative "reading" of celebrity where this stereotypical representation of femininity was challenged through the male/female clothing boundary and the boundary between audience and performer.

> If representational visibility equals power, then almost naked young white women should be running Western culture.

Strip 3

Live performance → Filmed performance recontextualisation (two levels[42])

is realised by blurred boundaries: dream/reality, male gaze/female gaze, audience/performer
to draw attention to: cross-dressed character and transhistorical character

Dream/reality boundary blurred: Special effects blur the film, creating a dreamlike state where a trace of the action is left as the action moves forward. As Preti leans over the staircase in an extravagant Bollywood film star stretch and the audience laugh with pleasure. The blurred camerawork increases the heightened feel where the blurred gender signs (Preti's costume and body language) have already signified a challenge to conventional meanings.

Male gaze/female gaze boundary blurred: Tolulu herself takes a picture of Preti, with her Polaroid instamatic camera. She admires Preti's body through the lens and is seen

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[42] In this strip, the live performance → filmed performance recontextualisation works on two levels – the performance as a whole and an episode of Tolulu taking a photo of Preti within the performance.

by the audience to look at him/her. Her visual interest in Preti stages female desire in close-up, rather than the larger, more general gaze of the audience or the gaze of the camera crew. Tolulu instructs Preti on how she wants to look at him/her, reversing the conventional gaze of the male looking at the female. Her directorial instructions increase her control, foregrounding her gaze and her choices of what gives her pleasure, as the person who is looking at the cross-dressed character of Preti.

As discussed in Chapter 2.1, sexual difference as a frame of visual reference maintains the domination of the phallic gaze according to Diamond. In researching the visibility of gendered meanings in live and mediated performance an alternative gaze is anticipated where difference is expanded through the reading process rather than condensed to "reinforce the familiar binarisms masculine-feminine, active-passive, penis-lack of penis" in Diamond's list. (Diamond, 1997, p 159)

Audience/performer boundary blurred: A man stands behind Tolulu, looking over her shoulder at Preti as she takes the photograph. His smile and body language show pleasure and excitement as his body language supports her action of taking the photograph. When she says "and your face", the guests enjoy the joke. Tolulu and the audience have been looking at Preti's *back,* not his face, the conventional subject matter of the photograph. As she photographs Preti's face, the audience laugh with recognition that they too have been engaged in the experience of looking at Preti closely as an object and admiring parts of his/her body.

Wollstonecraft looks at the Polaroid photograph of Preti, her action drawing attention to the history of photography. In Wollstonecraft's relationship to photography, a

significant process of representation is foregrounded by her history as a woman living in an era before the process of photography became widely available. This draws attention to her transhistorical character, and as a consequence the dominant gaze is challenged.

Strip 4

Filmed performance → Projection of filmed performance recontextualisation

is realised by blurred boundaries : interior/exterior boundary blurred, audience/performer
to draw attention to: domestic/public use of space[43]

Interior space/exterior space boundary blurred: The film edit has transformed the live performance to a mediated text and in this next stage the live performance is further exteriorised through the process of projection. The film of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* was projected onto the front of *Tenuta Diana* (Clissold House) in June 2001, one year after the live performance. The house (Clissold House) is closed to visitors, making the outdoor screening one of only a few occasions when the inside of the house is presented to the public.

The outdoor screening shows the features of the inside of the house: windows, doors and spiral staircase projected onto the outside of the house. This blurs the boundary between the interior space and exterior space, drawing thus attention to the domestic/public use of space, which facilitates the visibility of gender.

Reframed by the house, with the house used as a screen, the audience looks through

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[43] The drawing of attention by blurred interior/exterior boundaries to the domestic/public use of space functions on two levels. In the analysis of this strip, it is the level of the whole performance. In the previous analysis of strip 1, it applied within the performance.

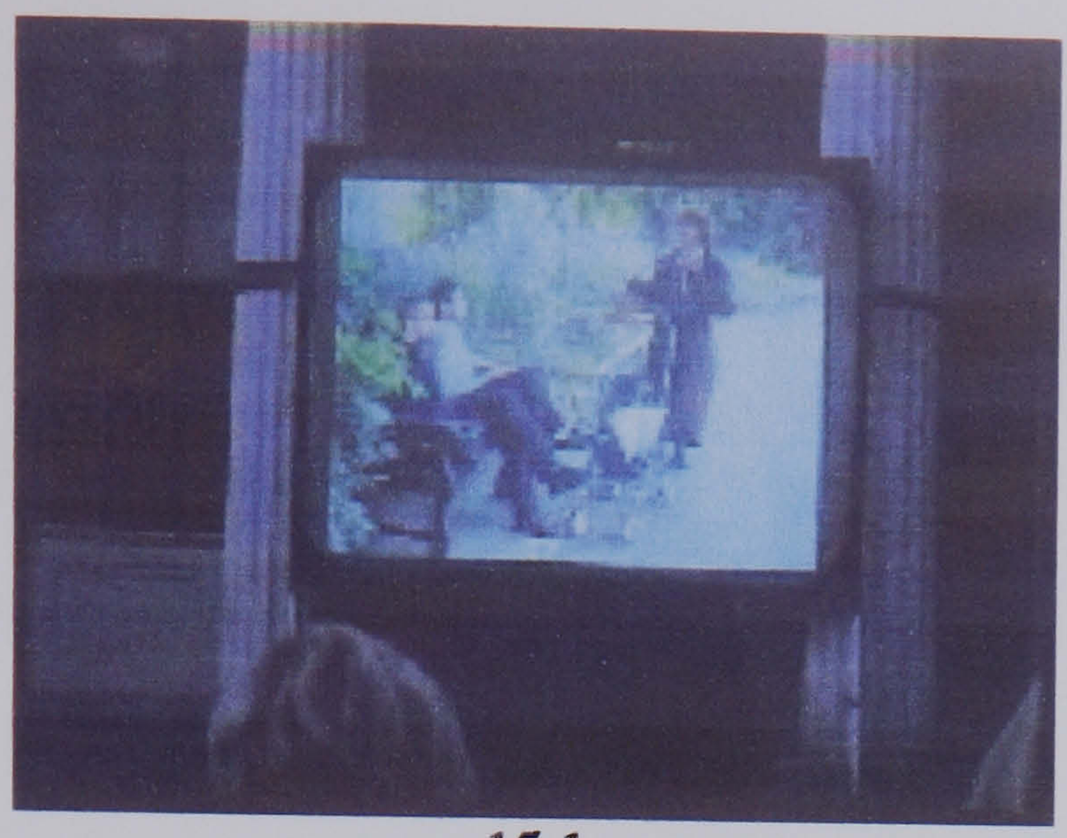
the façade, seeing into, and through to the other side of the house. Tolulu, framed and spotlit in the window, shows the route through the house to its "other" side, showing how to look through her female gaze. The audience look with Tolulu out of the house, bringing the back of the house to the front to discover the ontology of the house revealed from behind the façade by the camera. The surface of the house is made porous, questioned, mutable – no longer the resistant monument of the past.

Audience/performer boundary blurred: The role of the audience is emphasised by the presence of the audience at the live performance (2000) attending the outdoor screening (2001). The audience see themselves on film in relationship to the performers and exteriorised by the projection onto the front of the house.

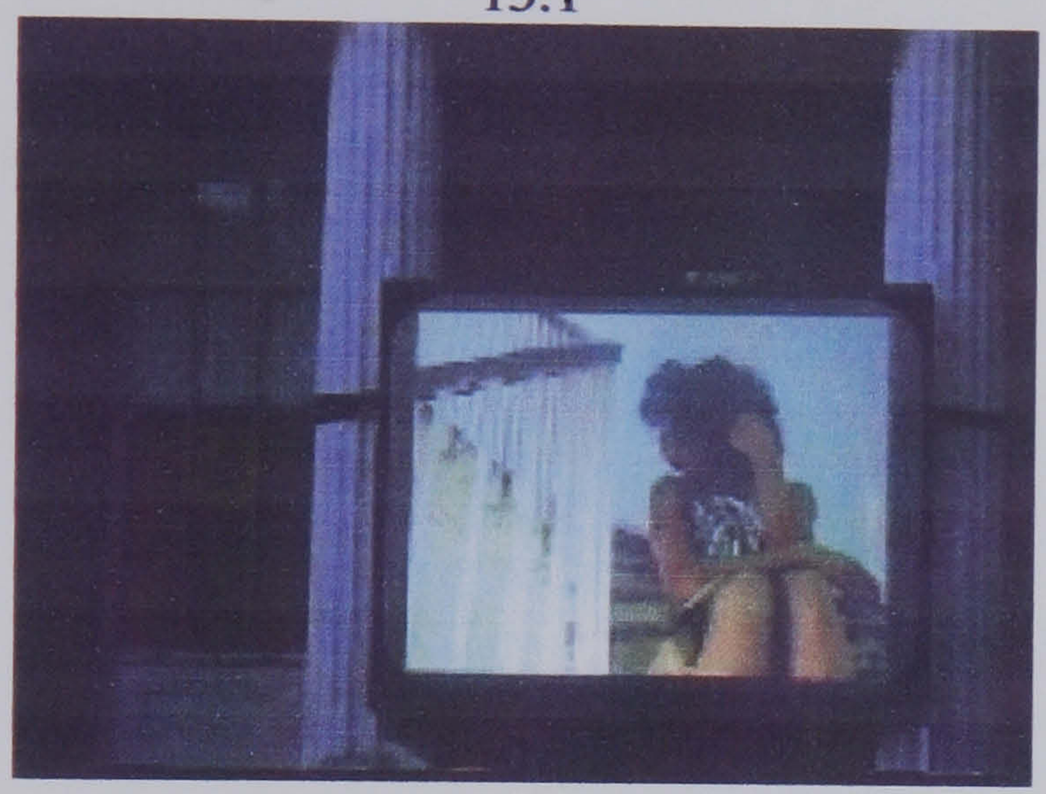
The audience who attended the live performance in 2000 has a different relationship with the film at the outdoor screening in 2001 from the new audience for the outdoor screening. The live show audience witness their journey through the house and park with the performers in character. This blurring of their roles of audience and performers draws attention to the domestic/public use of space.

In this "strip" the domestic/public use of space is drawn attention to by the recontextualisation process "Filmed performance → Projection of filmed performance". The blurred boundaries interior space/exterior space and audience/performer are achieved by projecting the film of the inside of the house onto the outside of the same house to draw attention to the domestic/public use of space, thus challenging the dominant gaze and facilitating the visibility of gendered meanings.

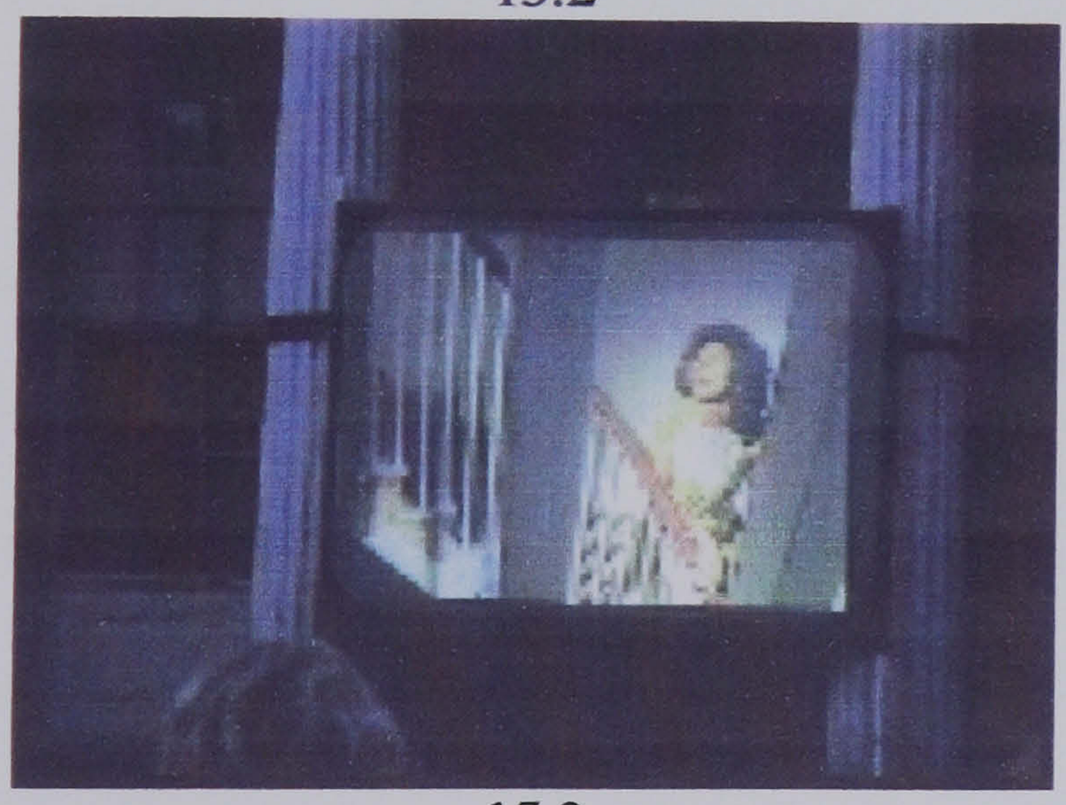
Outdoor Screening



15.1



15.2



15.3

Figure 15.1 Mary Wollstonecraft speaks to the guests at the back of the house, projected onto the facade
Figure 15.2, 15.3 Tolulu Smith sits / sings on the spiral staircase in the middle of the house projected onto the façade of the house

6.3 Summary

In this chapter I have analysed a series of "strips" motivated by a series of recontextualisations to draw attention to the Brechtian feminist categories drawn from and implicated in my own practice. The "strip" analysis of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* shows how the recontextualisations function to provide a space where the flow of gender meanings can be re-interrogated. Through filmed and projected site-based, devised theatre the audience, the performers and the theatre makers (scenographer, director, choreographer etc) are given the opportunity to own their performance. The ownership of the work and the increasing exteriorisation create a gap, a window where the flow of gendered meanings can be re-read in this alienated dramaturgy.

The participation by the performers, audience, extras and park visitors all helps to push the work forward, to support the leap from the interior, domestic space to the exterior, public space. The outdoor screening creates a transformation scaling-up from the small-scale, domestic limitation imposed on new performance work by the dominant culture. The increase in size (like the shadows projected in *Ironmistress*, see Chapter 3) signifies substance. Scale denotes epic importance, moving the work away from conventional, everyday readings, creating a new space for the work to be viewed in. The recontextualisation of live performance to film projected on the front of Clissold House alienates the process of spectatorship; this feminist reinterpretation of the alienation technique offers a new way of seeing.

Chapter 7

Concluding Thoughts: Moving on from a proscenium-arch, script-based to a site-based, devised dramaturgy

In Chapter 1, I mapped my journey into the heart of British mainstream theatre practice (both in London and in the wider domain of UK regional theatres), showing how a sense of urgency was created in me to find new languages with which to express myself as a theatre maker and critic. Issues surrounding the area of representation, and comparative analysis of the status of different discourses and their production and maintenance in a social context, became central to the analysis of both practice and theory. In Chapter 2, this approach informed a reading of feminist performance theories discussed as a two-way dynamic process feeding the practical and theoretical developments in the work. This chapter concluded with a summary of my experience of finding and articulating a sense of dual presence and critical engagement in the work, both in my role as theatre maker devising and collaborating within a creative team presenting work outside conventional theatre spaces, and in the process(es) and reception(s) of the work. In both these areas, my practical process and therefore also the "products" of the work were transformed.

Chapter 3 presented an in-depth analysis of the plays that influenced the development of this new approach to practice. Here, I argued that directing these plays provided me with the opportunity to exteriorise gendered meanings through application (and to some extent, also through invention of new) dramaturgical and scenographic

languages. Chapter 4 took these languages into practice, and applied them in an historical survey of the work of Fragments and Monuments, and particularly of our third production: *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (wherein the dramaturgy of gender was investigated through transhistorical and cross-dressed characters, domestic/public uses of space, strategies of recontextualisation in site-based, devised and filmed performances, and the media-experimentation of outdoor film projection as well).

Chapter 5 develops the social semiotic concept of "recontextualisation" which is applied in detail to the performance examples of Chapter 6. In this applied part of the study, motivated "strips" of the sample performance material from my main case study, *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, are analysed and represented to the reader/viewer with emphasis placed on reading "signs of gender visibility". These "strips" offer convenient units of analysis – smaller and easier to manage than entire scenes from the play, yet larger than the average unit of measurement applied in traditional linguistic studies. The size and function of the "strips" are taken from similar units and applications as expressed in the work of Goffman (1985) and Martinec (2000), and are recontextualised and reconstructed with my own performance material, for the purpose of analysis in this project. This application of a social semiotic method to the practice-based research, using original performance materials (live theatre, recorded and reframed for the camera and also for multimedia presentation) differentiates my contribution to this "strip analysis" from other academic studies drawing upon secondary source (studies which are themselves

scarce)[44] or from generic semiotic analysis of play-texts.

This thesis taken as a whole – "Staging and citing gendered meanings in live and mediated performance" – attempts to offer a detailed and sustained practice-based contribution to feminist performance theory. The DVD-Rom that accompanies the textual component is an integrated part of the thesis, presenting my body of work as an example of contemporary feminist performance practice which can be "re-recontextualised" by other viewers and readers (the ViewHear version of *Di's Party*, for instance, allows viewers to recut the play and to offer and share "strip analyses" of their own devising). The full range of analyses and methods in which I engage in the thesis- as set out in the Personal Statement and Introduction- should, taken together, offer a coherent thesis which contributes more than the sum of its parts.

The thesis as a whole offers a body of work and a method for recontextualising that work, and for reframing it in multimedia format. The visual and written texts on the DVD-Rom give equal weight to the performance and written research comprising this submission. Building upon that set of materials and meanings, but leaving deliberate gaps and spaces for debate and interpretation between them as well, I have attempted to offer a useful but also a flexible toolkit for use by future practitioners and scholars.

The dramaturgical categories for theatre: applications and limitations

Throughout the processes of research and development conducted over the past five years of study for the PhD (part-time), and especially in this past year's work of

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[44] See Elam's argument that "semiotic analyses of specific performances are also rare" (Elam, 1980, p 214). Elam cites only two examples where a semiotic analysis of a specific performance has been recorded

writing up, revision and recontextualisation of the thesis as a whole, I have developed some key representational strategies for staging and citing gendered meanings in performance, and have drawn these together for presentation as a new and distinct method of analysis. These strategies are organised as dramaturgical categories, as applied in Chapter 6 (where I take the reader through my semiotic analysis of four motivated "strips" from Di's *Midsummer Night Party)*. The "strips" offer a method for analysing live and mediated performance, wherein the making and tagging of social meanings in both dramaturgical and scenographic languages are critically questioned and then (re)presented.

The theory developed in these pages (and drawn from practice throughout) can be summarised in this way: the process of recontextualisation (for example, proscenium arch-based performance → site-based performance) draws attention to the impact of Brechtian approaches on the development of new feminist categories, which in turn challenged the dominant dynamic of the gendered gaze and opened up a critical space or stage upon which new forms of gender visibility could be played. The resulting recontextualisations are realised by the blurring of certain boundaries (for example audience/performer boundaries), which has the effect of drawing attention to what I have called, in shorthand form, "Brechtian feminist categories" (for example transhistorical characters).

By applying both a social semiotic theory of "recontextualisation" and a feminist theory of applied gender visibility, I have found a way to play with the tensions of opposing forces and trends, and to use this process to help make sense of my own practice. The dramaturgical categories offered here are intended to offer more than a

means of reading texts: they are equally applicable as tools for performance analysis.

"Brechtian feminist categories" (a term I shall use here, assuming that by this stage in the argument, the reader is sufficiently aware of the many qualifications and historicisations of the term applied in previous sections, as to allow this last-section shorthand) can be identified and highlighted for readers and viewers by directing selected plays by female playwrights in ways which focus on gendered roles and representations. For instance, my direction of the plays of both April de Angelis and Caryl Churchill – discussed at length in Chapter 3 – led to the development of what I shall here refer to (in another concluding shorthand) as "alienated theatre practices" which I employed in order to draw attention to gendered meanings created inside the frames of conventional theatre. By bringing the transhistorical and cross-dressed characters outside the theatre building, I found that my audience tended to discover and appreciate more about the potency of the domestic and public use of space. This discovery led to the addition of the "domestic and public use of space" as a dramaturgical category for application to my own devised work, and to other performance work that takes place in non-theatre spaces.

In the process of writing up the final version of this thesis, I found that the process of "recontextualisation" itself was forcing an exteriorising and articulation of the relationship of performers to audiences. This recontextualising had obvious and important impacts on the arrangement of the work across both inside and outside (internal and external) spaces. The projection of live performance 'about' a set of characters and their interiorised relationships to one another and to the internal architecture and spatial configurations of this particular house, onto the outside of that

same house in re-presentation of *Di's Party*, for example, reconfigured the certainties of the outside and inside spatial relationships. This reconfiguration from the inside to the outside and back again is in a sense a Brechtian alienation technique, and also, in another way, a feminist comment on the eternal dilemma of the internal /external role play of "gendered acts". In making this deliberate choice of external reframing, I made a scenographic intervention in the dynamic of the play, above and beyond the framing of the characters in terms of transhistorical and cross-dressed depictions.

The siting/citing of new feminist performance work outside the conventional structure of the proscenium arch can be seen to articulate the interior/domestic and the exterior/public rhetoric based in and maintaining dominant readings of gendered representations.

Through the progressive exteriorization that comes about from the recontextualisation process, a visible and influential decoding of gendered representational strategies unfolds. The increased participation by the audience in site-based theatre emphasizes the power relationship between meaning-makers (in conventional theatre, the author, director and to some extent also the actors) and the readers and audiences who receive and interpret meanings. The authority of the single author (as discussed at length by Barthes, 1977)[45] is contested in the feminist and politically-engaged process of recontextualisation: this process recasts the performers as creators of their own texts, and gives the audience and readers of the text increased control of their own gazes and increased power as producers of their own meanings. The meanings produced here are

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[45] p 146: "We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."

open-ended; they resist and "refuse closure" (Ferris, 1993,p 8).

In this thesis, I have attempted to define a new set of tools for presentation and analysis of a new and still emerging set of feminist performance practices for both live and mediated performance. My materialist feminist (and British, situated perspective) has no doubt influenced the choices of examples and approaches offered in support of this thesis. I hope in future to read and view other analyses offered by other feminist theatre makers, writing from and "recontextualising" from their own, different, and equally rich, perspectives.

Proscenium-arch

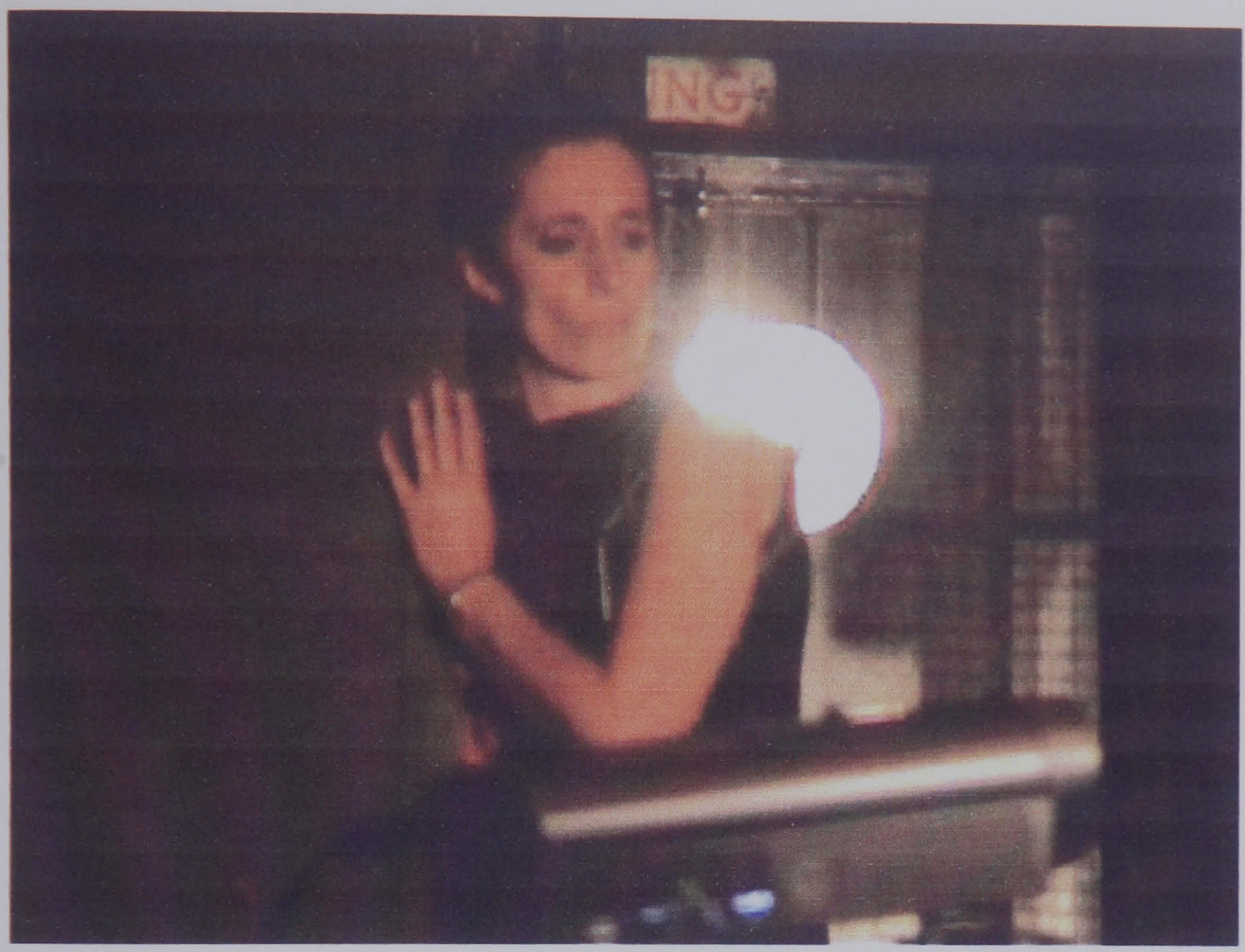

Figure 16 Vesna Milanovic in Cochrane Test 1: exploration of proscenium-arch using her physical dance language

Appendix A

Analysis of an Interview with Max Stafford-Clark by Anna Birch: 25 June 2003

(The full video documentation and transcript of that interview are available from the author.)

Thirteen years after my directorial training at the Royal Court Theatre under the direction of Max Stafford-Clark, I arranged to interview the man who had played such a central role in my own development as a practitioner, and to do that for the specific purpose of analysing my own professional practice in relation to my PhD thesis. This context gave a new "staging" to my relationship to the man, and gave him a new frame or lens through which to view my work, and my questions about his work. The passing of time had, of course, also allowed for some settling in of ideas and methods into what we both might now see as "recent history" rather than as contemporary practice.

I met Stafford-Clark on a warm summer evening in July 2003, after his rehearsal for *Duck* by Stella Feehily.

I was keen to find out whether Stafford-Clark and I could have a discussion, after time had passed and our original director/assistant roles had been altered by time and experience, and to see if we could revisit previous ideas and working approaches

together in a way that might help me to understand and articulate the development of my own ideas and approaches to making theatre.

Conducting this interview helped me to see my time of training at the Royal Court – which at the time was too close to view objectively – from the position of hindsight. What became clear in discussion with Stafford-Clark, and consideration of my formative years at the Court in the context of his experiences of other trainees and periods of the theatre's history, was that the opportunities to develop new writing in my traineeship were more limited than in previous years. The Court was changing at that time. Anxiety about funding and making ends meet meant less time could be spent with writers and actors developing new work. An attempt to balance the books was made by producing *Apples* by Ian Dury in 1989 (I was assistant director to Simon Curtis), which used a budget three times the size of the average main stage new writing production. Although expected to be a blockbuster, this musical flopped and left the Royal Court in even more serious financial difficulty. My director training award was shared between the Royal Court and the Leicester Haymarket Theatre, which was also facing serious financial constraints, with the Arts Council of Great Britain reorganising to become the Arts Council of England. Money and finances are key preoccupations for Stafford-Clark, inside and outside the rehearsal room.

Money and status

Stafford-Clark made it clear that how you spend money bears a direct relationship on the quality of the work produced, so money spent on research for a new play will deliver detailed plays. Time is money and money spent on rehearsal will deliver well-rehearsed actors. He is passionate about value, status and hierarchy. In rehearsal the

status of characters hold in relation to each other is worked out with a pack of playing cards. Characters can play high status (a Ten or Jack for example), but be received in a low status way, as a Two or Three.

For Stafford-Clark, *Serious Money* by Caryl Churchill is probably the most successful play, and the one he refers to most in conversation. The play is about money and the stock exchange. Stafford-Clark says the strength of the play is the fact that although Churchill disapproves of the money market, she is able to reflect the excitement and spirit of it in her play.

Stafford-Clark emphasises that women's lives have changed significantly in the last 30 years and because change is the stuff of drama, he has been drawn to directing new writing by women playwrights. He goes on to use the same frame of reference for plays by Irish writers (all male) that he has gone on to direct more recently, explaining that Ireland has arrived in the 21st century without passing through the 20th century. His desire to direct plays by writers who have undergone major change in their lives doesn't explain why women writers stay at 38% of work produced, and female directors do not feature on the payroll of major theatre-producing institutions (such as the National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company).

Women directors: Why are they underrepresented in theatre?

I used this famous quote by playwright Sarah Daniels to introduce my concerns around the few women directors who stay the course:

> BUT more importantly it is about trust – with their track record would you trust a man to direct a feminist play?
>
> (Daniels 1984, pp23-24)

Stafford-Clark returned to this point, reshaping it to suggest that I questioned his expertise in directing plays by women. This was not the focus of my question, because I am absolutely sure that he has the expertise to direct anything that he wants to. He took a position of ignorance as a hallmark of the good director, who learns from the writer, stressing how much he had gained from the writers – including women – with whom he has worked, avoiding my line of questioning, which was about how his involvement/intervention in new plays by women writers, in particular, had changed the nature of the work.

Hiding the ideological nature of the process

He voiced concern over sometimes overstepping the line in the delicate script development process, saying that *A Laughing Matter* by April de Angelis might have become more his play than hers, because of his work in developing her script. He wasn't sure that the writer would agree.

The power struggle between writer and male director

Caryl Churchill is held very high in his estimation as a writer who keeps her own writing process intact despite the script development process, bringing new things out in her written drafts of the plays that surprise him, such as the two different timescales in *Cloud Nine* (Victorian Africa and 1970s London). By rephrasing my question to, "Do you have the expertise to direct women's work" – obviously he has the expertise, that is not in question – Stafford-Clark found a way out of the important question I asked, which is why women directors are not directing so much new writing by women.

Appendix B

Background on the Fragments and Monuments trilogy:

From *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!* through *Lovely Stones* to *Di's Midsummer Night Party*

Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!

Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!, the first part of the trilogy, was made for Scenofest 1996 at Central St Martins College of Art and Design. I was invited by Madelon Schwirtz, a student on the MA Scenography course, to work as dramaturge and director on her final exam performance. Schwirtz planned to deconstruct two classic texts featuring women characters and use lines from *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Garcia Lorca and *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg. The deconstructed text was organised into the following themes: family, desire and destiny. It became the backbone for the devising process. The play *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill was used as a starting point, and personal material to do with secrets in Schwirtz's family, about relations from different cultures, fed the work.

The performers researched the characters from the play-texts and developed their own research projects into language (Swedish and Spanish) and the historical context from which the plays emerged. In casting Adela and Miss Julie, I chose performers who had physical skill, as I was determined to respond to the stereotypical casting I observe on TV. I cast Tracy Bickley and Lucy Burden as Adela and Miss Julie, and as Tracy is black British and Lucy is white British, the representation of femininity

was opened up.

The installation was built by Madelon in the Lethaby Gallery at Central St Martins in London. She used recycled silkscreen frames, which were constructed as a train with seats for the passengers. The lighting was discreet and effective, employing halogen lamps and designed by Charles Balfour (established UK lighting designer). The spectators were invited into the train in the role of passengers, and the performers worked around them in close proximity. The relationship of the performers to the audience is emphasised by the proximity of the performer to the spectator, and provides a location where the relationship of the spectator to the performer can be investigated.

In *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, Adela and Miss Julie toast each other and muse about how their writers would respond if they knew about their meeting:

Adela:	To good girls. What would Strindberg say about that?
Julie:	Strindberg. What would Strindberg… To young women He was a very paranoid man. Always worried about feminists. To get away from them.
Adela:	The feminists are coming.
Julie:	To feminists. Jag ar feminist. Who was your writer?
Adela:	Federico Garcia Lorca.
Julie:	Federico Garcia Lorca.
Adela:	Say it with passion! Maybe Lorca was a feminist! Well, he loved writing about women He was the eldest son of a wealthy farm owner.

A true socialist who was committed to the poor and underprivileged.
He wrote about our plight, and love and poetry.
Maybe a way of avoiding writing about himself and being gay in those times.
Ha! Pepe was his boyfriend.
That explains why I can not get him, that is why.
He could not have him, and I could not have him and none of us could have him.

Adela: The first thing I will do is
To go into every single one of Lorca's plays and snog all the men.
For Lorca of course!

Julie: Mmm… Spanish men.

The role of the writer as someone who is outside the action of the play is subverted here, and Adela and Miss Julie talk about "their" writers. This mechanism empowers the characters to take control of their own destinies and to "write" themselves, instead of being written by their respective authors. The traditional preoccupation by male writers with women as passive and malleable to their dreams and desire is commented upon. In this excerpt of dialogue, the Swedish language is introduced, which changes the texture of the dialogue and emphasises the multiple readings that language can offer. This paves the way for our use of the Italian language in *Di's Midsummer Night Party*. The use of different languages, in this case Spanish and Swedish, draws attention to the dominant role of the English language, and points the direction for more development by the company of the choice of language used in our work.

Dogs are Alone Too and They Live! was cut into a showreel, which emphasised the relationship between the spectator and the performers. In some instances, the performers revealed themselves in an explicitly sexual way, for example Adela lying on the floor among the seated passengers dreaming of her lover, and Miss Julie and Adela astride a horse in an orgasmic climax. The overt sexuality of these scenes was

played out in close proximity to the audience, and the evidence of the mutual pleasure experienced by the spectators and the performers is visible in the showreel. The performance took place in early September and the atmosphere was hot, sweaty and celebrative, bringing a carnival atmosphere to the performance.

After the success of *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, a new concept was written for the next performance project, which included the characters Adela and Miss Julie. Princess Diana died in a car accident (31 August 1997) and this phenomenon led Diana to be added to the writer's concept. The concept, written by Madelon Schwirtz and myself, read as follows:

> **Fragments and Monuments 1998**
> Concept by Anna Birch and Madelon Schwirtz
> The show will be performed in September 1998 in the Lethaby Gallery, Central St Martins College of Art and Design (venue pending).
> Our starting point is character, and in this piece, Adela from The House of Bernarda Alba by Federico Garcia Lorca and Miss Julie from Miss Julie by August Strindberg meet each other. In our version the characters leave their plays and are written from a female point of view. The audience meet them on their journey through Europe by train. The first half leads up to the characters leaving the confinement of the train, the inside, and in the second half the characters are outside the train.
> The meeting of the two women is explored and the events when they leave the train or "go off the rails". The first half gathers momentum for the women to burst out of the train. In the second half the characters are not on track and anything can happen.
> There are at least two locations. The first half is set on the train and the second half could be set anywhere in Europe.
> References to be consulted during the production process: the work of artists – Rachel Whitread, Tracy Emin and Cindy Sherman (see fig 17). Cinema – *Thelma and Louise* directed by Ridley Scott, 1991.
> Scenography: A small-scale touring set is required that offers non-naturalistic, stylised movement potential. The choice of costume is emphasised in the design and uses references to contemporary fashion and period costume. The performance environment is enhanced by the smell of food cooking.
> The following themes are repeated in the work and investigated through the process of making the work: opposites – inside/outside, interior/exterior, north/south, young/old, cold/hot, male/female, black/white. Journeys through Europe by Eurorail are drawn on, as is the experience of travelling through Europe on the eve of the European exchange mechanism. Age and time. Female representation. Princess Diana as an icon/blonde bombshell. The creation of Diana as a contemporary myth (Diana the Huntress and the Hunted).

***Untitled*216 (1990)*, Cindy Sherman**

Figure 17

The headline "F&M DECONSTRUCTING THE CANON" was printed on *Fragments and Monuments* stationery, summing up our desire to rewrite, and in the process gain some ownership of, theatre history.

Lovely Stones

Lovely Stones was the second performance project on which I collaborated with Schwirtz. The company Fragments and Monuments was born, and a writer, Janet Goddard, commissioned. New writing in London in 1996 was mainly inside building-based theatres, and Fragments and Monuments changed this through our site-based work. The first proposed venue for *Lovely Stones* was the Lethaby Gallery at Central St Martins College of Art and Design. This space was later unavailable, making it necessary to find a new venue, and the scenographer (Schwirtz) discovered Willoughbys warehouse in Borough, south London.

Goddard wrote the following synopsis of *Lovely Stones* (produced in August 1998):

> *Lovely Stones*, based on an improvised performance by Fragments and Monuments (*Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, summer 1997):
> The central springboard is the meeting of Miss Julie and Adela Alba, both women believed to have died at their own hands after risking unconventional relationships with men. They are central, but their stories have to be developed forwards, not to be looked back upon.
> In order to do this I discovered two modern females who are probably about the same age as Julie was during her play (Adela was younger), and who represent a contemporary viewpoint regarding different forms of relationships with men, the conventional and the flamboyant.
> Both these characters lack the passion and intensity of Julie and Adela, because their relationships are a means to an end: for Diana fame and fortune, for Shalawah professional opportunities.
> As women they demonstrate passion for their work and for their personal pleasure and status. In this they are very different from Julie and Adela.
> Adela – whose life, although she would now be 80 years old (*The House of Bernarda Alba* was written in 1936), has spanned the feminist revolution – feels that she and Julie now must die again in order to inspire the other two to take control of their lives, to celebrate their sex and to affirm their good fortune.
> Julie wants to support Adela, but feels that it could be a waste of time to cut her throat again for Shalawah and Diana.

Diana finds it difficult to recognise the self-sacrifice her older sisters are prepared to make for her, while Shalawah in the end feels safer and better nourished by Adela and Julie than she does in the company of Diana.
Adela and Diana do not retreat into a "cupboard" of non-commitment, because they consider themselves free – Adela because she does not dread abasement and wants to be avenged on the sisters who let her down, literally, as *in The House of Bernarda Alba*, and in terms of *Lovely Stones*, on the mediocre modern women she is caught up with.
Diana is too secure in her cultural definition to need to retreat. Were she ordered to do so by a man she would, but apart from that she feels free.
Julie retreats because she is shackled with the reduced volume of life that commitment to the unwholesome Jan has given her; Shalawah because she knows she has vision, talent and energy, but is worn thin by using it to further her ends in the fettered and censored male-dominated artistic community in which she works.
Shalawah will benefit most from Julie and Adela's re-enactment of their passionate plea, through death, for recognition as themselves and not as cogs in the wheels of their tired and restrictive cultures. She is the future. She realises she has not yet been born. She is excited by the opportunities presented to her, by encountering Adela and Julie on a train and in a hotel laundry.

The synopsis describes the power relationships between the four characters and the generational differences. The writer emphasises the quality of the older women's experience of life and its hardships over the thinner, "less important struggles" of the younger women. *Her Sister's Tongue* by Goddard for Plain Clothes Productions (1996) featured a memorable scene of two characters dancing on their dining room table. The domestic absurdity, scale and gothic horror of Goddard's writing fit our aesthetic framework.

Lovely Stones was enhanced by the locations used in the production of the play, and the relationship to the action of the play offered by the sites helped the audience to understand the concept behind the production. This was borne out by some feedback we received from the audience, who experienced the journey on the coach and the arrival and departure from the warehouse as integral to their experience of *Lovely Stones*. One member of the audience reported on her encounter with other audience members on their walk to London Bridge underground station, where they discussed

the experience of the play, and this made the event more meaningful and enjoyable for her. The audio interview recorded with Goddard (October 1997) includes her account of the process that she went through as a writer working with Fragments and Monuments.

A specially hired coach collected the audience from Central St Martins in Holborn, London, and the journey was interrupted by a fictional assassination of the Pope, which caused Diana and her assistant Shalawah to be detained at a hotel run by Miss Julie and Jean somewhere in Europe. The hotel was Willoughby's warehouse, the site of the second part of the performance.

Summary

Dogs are Alone Too and They Live! is a key example of where:

Devised performance as a recontextualisation of script-based performance is observed to increase the visibility of gender.

- The performers researched and devised their own characters, which gave ownership of the performance script (text and action) resisting the passive relationship of the conventional actor to the text.
- The passive relationship of the female actress playing a role from a conventional play-text as an object to be looked at is challenged. Mulvey's (1989) concept of "to-be-looked-at-ness" is deconstructed by the performer's capacity to define her relationship to the dominant male gaze. The dominant male gaze was reversed to facilitate the embodied performance of Adela, who controls the spectators gaze.

- The relationship of the interior and exterior is emphasised by the moment when the performers break out of the interior space to celebrate their newfound identity in opposition to their destiny written by men.

Lovely Stones is a key example of:

Site-based performance as a recontextualisation of proscenium-arch performance, leading to the use of exterior and interior space, and a transformed spectator/performer boundary is observed to increase the visibility of gender.

- The bus journey created a shared space for the spectators and guests where the boundary was blurred between their roles. The bus carried performers and spectators across London, where panoramic views of London contextualised the presence of passengers (performers and spectators) in a contemporary setting, although the performers were from a different time period. A transhistorical experience was achieved for all the passengers: performers and spectators alike.
- The warehouse, an exterior site, offered scale as the interior of a hotel. Miss Julie's hotel set in the warehouse offered the low status role of domesticity to be critically assessed.

Di's Midsummer Night Party (2000)

The development of the final part of the trilogy is documented in Chapter 4.

Appendix C

Scripts from

1996: ***Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!***

1998: ***Lovely Stones:***
available on DVD-Rom attached to thesis (6,639 words)

2000: ***Di's Midsummer Night Party***

2001: ***Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane***

Dogs are Alone Too, and They Live!

Transcript from dress rehearsal, August 13 and 14 1996
Lethaby Gallery, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

Hostess of the train: Good morning ladies and gentlemen.
The train has arrived on platform two.
Please do take a seat and make yourself comfortable.
Some seats are reserved for the following guests:
.....

Entrance

Adela rushes into the train. Miss Julie smashes all her suitcases in the train, Adela catches them.

Julie: Wait.
Is there someone to help me?
Quick.
And hop, come on now
Hop, hop, hop

Close the door

Midsummer Day on a stuffy train
Crowds of people staring at you, standing still on the platforms
Longed to be moving
Going and get away from your memories and your luggage always follows you.
Always filled platforms.
People looking at you.
You think I am going to stay under this roof as your whore.
Come with me into the stable yard while I put you through your paces.

Come here
Quick
Here
Jump, jump now
Good girl
And jump
A bit higher.

Bird scene

Adela: If I had a bird I let it out of my window.

Julie: My green finch.

Adela: I would send it to Pepe, with my love.

Julie: Let it go!
You can not have her
It is the only thing that loves me
Leave her alone

Adela: Fly to,
Fly through the sky

Julie: Don't let it fly away, don't let it go to strangers, do not
I would rather you killed her.

Adela: To Pepe.

Julie: Poor thing.

Horse scene

Julie: What are you doing?
Are these your suitcases?
What are you doing?
What are you doing with all these cases?
Why do you laugh?

Adela: Because I am sitting on a horse,
And we are going on a journey
Come on, come on

Julie: Where are we going?

Adela: We are going into the fields, and see our men working
in the fields and jump in the village
We are going through the woods
We are coming up to a lake
We are going to take off.
We are flying to the sky, into the sun
I would love the world
No one can get us.

Julie: Fly high
Fly, fly into the sky
We are going fast.
We are going to fall, we are falling.

Bed scene

Julie: What are you doing?

Adela:	Have you ever been in love? With a man? Tonight I would lie in my bed I would hear Pepe's horse.
Julie:	Pepe. Who is Pepe?
Adela:	At night I lay on my bed in the heat. I can hear his horse, through the village When he comes to the yard. Then I turn on my bed and lie with hardly any clothes on, And sit in the window And then he comes to me And then he takes me … in the yard, and we make love.
Julie:	Oh, Bonita
Adela:	Pepe
Julie:	Pepe, it sounds like daddy.
Adela:	He, mama
Julie:	Mama Sita
Adela:	Kiss my feet.
Julie:	What is your name?
Adela:	Adela, Adela.

Top Girls section

Julie:	Adela. Jean kissed mine.
Adela:	It was not her fault She had no choice
Julie:	He kissed my feet you know
Adela:	She was scared
Julie:	He loved me He kissed me He took me by the hand
Adela:	It was not her fault

Julie:	He was so romantic
Adela:	She buried it in the woods
Julie:	Taking me into the bedroom
Adela:	And the stupid dog dug it up, and left it on her doorstep
Julie:	Took me into the room
Adela:	The women dragged her through the streets, screaming to kill her.
Julie:	Kissed my neck
Adela:	The men came running down from the olive groves, holding knives and screaming "kill her"
Julie:	When the servants came down and were all screaming and making a noise. … take over the kitchen and drink and dance.
Adela:	It was not her fault… stupid dog… she was scared.
Julie:	He took me because he loved me He kissed my hand, he kissed my arms He kissed my neck, my cheeks And at the end he laid me down on the bed.

Bed scene

Adela:	How long does it take?
Julie:	Nine months.
Adela:	I meant the train journey.

Picnic scene (performed in real time)

Adela:	Have you got any food? I am hungry.
Julie:	I have got some oranges. Cheese, bread…
Adela:	I can see oranges from my bedroom window.
Julie:	This reminds me of my father, twice a day I had to sit

and eat with him and only say what he wanted to hear.

Adela: I have got four sisters.
I am the youngest.

Where is Adela?
Adela bring my fan, I am hot.
Adela what are you gossiping to the servants about?
Adela
Adela, Adela, Adela
I will change my name.

Julie: What will you change it into?
Julie?

Adela: No, I will keep my name, and I will change my life.
My father died last week.

Julie: I am sorry.

I go wherever I get some peace from him
In the kitchen where it is warm
And Christine cooking
Pots and pans, onions fry

Adela: In my next life, I am going to be a man, I am.
So I can do whatever I want.
I will tell my wife to relax and leave the cleaning
I will go out to the fields
With the rest of the men
I will tear the bread like a man, take whole tomatoes
and squeeze them in my hands.

Julie: What are you doing?

Adela: Eating like a man.

Julie: I had to dress like a boy.
I had to do all the work they do.
I had to broom the horses and fodder them, and wry
and hunt.
And clean up the table.
All the men had to do all the women's jobs, and all the
women had to do all the men's jobs.

Adela: Your mother sounds brilliant.

Julie: She was.

Adela: A toast to your mother.

Julie: A toast to my mother.

A toast to us.

Adela: To our courage.

Julie: To our courage.

Adela: To our freedom.

Julie: To our freedom.

Adela: To good girls.
What would Strindberg say about that?

Julie: Strindberg.
What would Strindberg…
To young women
He was a very paranoid man.
Always worried about feminists.
To get away from them.

Adela: The feminists are coming.

Julie: To feminists.
Jag ar feminist.
Who was your writer?

Adela: Federico Garcia Lorca.

Julie: Federico Garcia Lorca.

Adela: Say it with passion!
Maybe Lorca was a feminist!
Well, he loved writing about women
He was the eldest son of a wealthy farm owner.
A true socialist who was committed to the poor and underprivileged.
He wrote about our plight, and love and poetry.
Maybe a way of avoiding writing about himself and being gay in those times.
Ha! Pepe was his boyfriend.
That explains why I can not get him, that is why.
He could not have him, and I could not have him and none of us could have him.

The first thing I will do is
to go into every single one of Lorca's plays and snog all the men.
For Lorca of course!

Julie: Mmm… Spanish men.

Adela: The night my father died, my mother stood at the end

of the table and said: "Daughters, for eight years you will mourn for your father's death."

Julie: Eight years.

Dancing scene

Adela: We will see shut all the windows and doors and not one bit of fresh air will come into this house.
The first thing that I will do is break down the doors and run around the house and will open up all the windows and all the shutters and let in the fresh air.
I will reach out into the dark and touch the stars.
I will tell the neighbours our gossip.
I will go to my bedroom window and make love to Pepe.
I will scream out to all the neighbours; we are in here, come and get us.
And I will go into the yard, and open up the front door, and invite the whole village in.

Signorita.

And then into my mother's best rooms,
Roll up the carpet.
And we will have a party.
Come on let's dance.

Watermelon scene

Julie: You think I can not stand the sight of blood.
You think I am so weak.
I would like to see your blood, your brains on a chopping block.
I would like to see your whole sex swimming in a sea of blood.
I think I could eat out of your skull.

Adela: Bye, mother.

Julie: Bye, people.

Adela: Bye train

Julie: Bye picnic

Adela: Bye family
Bye shoes

Julie:	Bye shoes
Adela:	Bye luggage
Julie:	Bye story
Adela:	Bye Lorca
Julie:	Bye Lorca. Bye Strindberg. Bye.
Adela:	Bye.

Di's Midsummer Night Party, June 2000

An interactive performance that transports you to a fantasy party in Tuscany.

The audience is a maximum of 35.

There are five cameras. Cameras 1, 2 and 3 follow the guests from the portal to the end of the show.

camera 1	Matt Fox
camera 2	Lucy Bristow
camera 3	interviewer
cameras 4 & 5	fixed surveillance cameras

Estimated times are set next to action, e.g. 9.00/11.00

Italics describe action.

9.00/11.00 *St Mary's Small Church, Stoke Newington Church Street, N16.*

The guests arrive at the gate, which is the portal entrance to Tuscany. The gate is dressed with red curtains and has a small staircase up and down for the audience to enter through.

Stage manager 1 operates church sound and manages portal entrance

Stage manager 2 (operating fixed DV camera): Please record your permission here for your image to be released on film for broadcast purposes.

Mary Wollstonecraft *arrives walking and clutching an invitation to Di's Midsummer Night Party. She joins the guests who are directed through the arch/portal into Tuscany by the steward and ticket collector.*

The cemetery is lit by night lights, which are burnt down to show the time. Monteverdi is heard being sung in the church.

The time is 4am and a bell is heard striking four times. The guests are met by Bernie, *who is the party hostess, halfway down the Church Path, which is taped with security tape. The audience sees her walk up the Church Path. She is fed up because the party is going on too late and she wants to go to bed.*

Bernie: You are late, you are late.

Bernie *speaks in Italian and* Mary Wollstonecraft *understands her and speaks Italian to her. She agrees to let the guests in for twenty minutes only and disappears back into the house.*

Tuccia *is seen for the first time set on a gravestone.*

Mary *lets the guests through the security tape.*

9.10/11.10 *The guests arrive at the park and are given a glass of wine by some Italian drink sellers with Vespa motorcycles. The results of an Italian football match are heard on their transistor radio.*

9.15/11.15 *The guests proceed into the park, where the drive is lit by oilburning torches.* Mary *hurries the guests down the drive to the party. The camera operators continue to pursue the guests and* Mary.

Fabricio *passes by with a buggy and ghettoblaster playing Italian rap.*

9.20/11.20 *Clissold House is now in view and the party music can be heard, and party extras are wearing Diana hats, dancing, fooling around, snogging, having sex at the windows.* Mary *stops to have a look and slow the other guests down. There is five minutes of choreographed material. The party is obviously on its last legs and there is evidence of used glasses.*

Party extras are sitting on the benches talking and laughing, or sleeping and drunk. Bits and pieces of costume or party debris are visible. Mary *hurries the guests past, towards the house.*

Tuccia *is seen disappearing into Clissold House, leaving the Blue Door open.*

9.25/11.25 *The guests enter the house through the Blue Door. There is a steward here to help the guests and stop anyone who is not a guest from entering the house.*

The noise of sex in the kitchen is heard and there is a trolley with leftover drinks ready to be cleared away outside the kitchen.

In the Hall of Mirrors the light is flattering and theatrical, and the Party sound tape is heard.

Tuccia *is set in the archway with mirrors around her. She is looking for compliments and asks the guests:*

Tuccia: Which is my best side?

Mary *uses the mirrors to check her appearance and discusses the fashions and use of mirrors with the guests. They encourage the guests to check their appearance and discusses the fashions and use of mirrors with the guests. They encourage the guests to check their appearance and make themselves ready for the party.*

The party extras appear in Diana masks and push through the guests and out of the door. The effect is of the guests being squashed by multiple Dianas, who are reflected many times over in the mirrors.

The guests are ushered out of the hall of mirrors and into the stairwell by a steward and Tuccia *and* Mary.

Scenario for the Staircase and Dome section

Tuccia *and* Mary *enter with the audience from the Hall of Mirrors.*

Mary *enters the stairwell with the audience. The stewards direct the way.*

Tolulu *is rehearsing her song for Diana's party, her present for Diana. We hear her warming up her voice.* Tolulu *emerges from the door at top of the stairs. She slowly descends the stairs singing as she walks down. The sound is haunting and moving.*

Tolulu: The House of Windsor you will fall
You used me
Now I see
You took my children
And stole my Dodi
Oh my revenge
Oh my revenge

Charles you used me as a mat
Laid me flat
Then you spat
Camilla's my love
And they know it up above
Oh my revenge
Oh my revenge

Tolulu: Pepe, Pepe, Pepe!

She exits and bumps into Preti.

Tolulu: Hello, have you seen my Pepe? Oooh you look absolutely gorgeous! You wouldn't find that in Marks. Is that silk? (Tolulu *reaches over to touch* Preti's *shoulder and exits giggling with pleasure.)*

Preti *walks through the guests and pauses directly under the Dome and then up the stairs to the party. The fan covers half of* Preti's *face.*

Bernie *is heard tapping with a stick on the banister.*

Preti: Excuse me? Is the party upstairs?

Bernie (*in Italian*): Try the white door downstairs.

Preti: I am sorry, I don't speak Italian.

Bernie: Through the white door (*directing* Preti *out of the house*).

Preti: Oh, the white door, thank you.

Preti (*to guests*): Excuse me.

Bernie *continues to tap.*

She finds the door is locked, and is embarrassed by fumbling with the door handle. Preti *takes off jacket and crosses to the staircase again and climbs up, goes back downstairs and as she opens the door, she bumps into* Tolulu.

Tolulu: Can I have a photo please?

Preti: Oh if you must! (*Delighted, poses on the stairs for the photo.*)

Tolulu (*takes photo*): Close your mouth please, etc, get rid of your boobs, better take another one.

Preti *tries more poses for* Tolulu *and is interrupted by the sound of* Bernie. *The guests look up into the Dome.* Bernie *is seen playing the banisters like a harp and coming downstairs.*

Eventually Bernie *appears smiling and playing her stick.* Tolulu *takes a photo.*

Preti: No please stop this! Stop this now! (*stamps her foot and demands*) Party?

Party, where is the party? (*from outside the door*)

(*returns exasperated and very breathless*) Where is the party? (*She plays with* Bernie *and tries to woo the stick from her*. Bernie *teases* Preti *and eventually gives her the stick.* Preti,*the Celebrity looks at the stick and makes as if to play it but changes her mind and breaks the stick and throws it over the banister*.

Preti *exits upstairs to the top of the house.*

Mary *beckons the guests upstairs and into the gallery.*

Bernie: scuse, can you pass me my chopstick! (*brings the audience upstairs also.*)

<u>9.40/11.40</u> *Art Gallery*

The Art Gallery is a room with seven windows and each window is labelled as a different piece of art. The windows have descriptions of each of the actors. There are three benches in the centre of the room that the audience are welcome to sit down on.

Bernie *and* Tolulu *bring the audience up the stairs from the Dome and show them into the Art Gallery.*

Bernie *enters her frame as a portrait.* Mary *arrives with the last members of the audience and closes the door. She walks round the gallery anti-clockwise until she arrives at* Tuccia.

Mary *speaks Italian and asks* Bernie *questions about the statue.*

Mary: Scuse Signora

Everyone has to be seen by guests! Frames work, where else?

Bernie: It doesn't mean anything.

Mary: I suppose that's a twentieth-century way of thinking.

Tuccia *and* Bernie *have a heated debate in Italian and then a little English.*

Mary: Is she Greek, is she Roman, is she a myth?

Bernie: You ask too many questions!

Mary: This is an art gallery, why shouldn't I ask so many questions?

Tuccia: (*bursts out*) I am a statue!

Mary: Tell us who you are.

Tuccia: (*clarifies*) I am a statue.

Mary: What is the significance of this? (*pointing at her sieve*)

Bernie: Don't touch the objects!

Tuccia: I proved that I was a virgin with this sieve! It was a miracle! (*wriggles her hips*) It is a miracle to find a virgin these days!

Mary: Plus ca change!

Preti *enters from the top of the stairs. She goes straight to the window and looks for the paparazzi who she thinks are following her.*

Preti: Thank god, thank god, thank god.

Bernie: Ah, you finally got here!

Preti: We have to shut the shutters shut (*very controlled*), the shutters please. Can we shut the shutters please?

Mary: Who are you? Who are you?

Bernie: I don't want to be in a dark room! (Bernie *goes to her*

window)

Mary: Why, pourquoi? Why do we have to shut the shutters?
You want to shut all the shutters?

Preti: Trust me, trust me!

Tolulu *enters from sound room and opens the shutters that Preti has shut.*

Tolulu: Did anyone see a baldheaded bloke on the way in?

Preti *stands in front of shutter 2 to defend it.*

(overlap dialogue here)

Mary: We can only half shut this shutter, the one with a view
of the river unfortunately.

Mary *is at "her" window with her leg across it.* Bernie *is fed up with the* Celebrity *and goes to talk to* Mary *in her window.*

Mary (to Bernie): What is the name of the river?

Mary *pulls* Bernie *over to her and describes the river in seductive terms. They speak in Italian.*

Meanwhile Preti *snorts coke, in her frame.*

Tolulu *takes a Polaroid.*

Mary *comes over to* Preti *and tells her about her "drug" history, starting with her use of laudanum and going on to her depression and difficult mood swings.*

(choice for Mary*)*

Mary: Can I have some of that? helps you get into motion,
walk about well.

or: You shouldn't do that you know. My daughter died of
laudanum. Is that laudanum?

or Hi, are you all right, would you like something?

After collecting herself, Preti *is very animated.* Preti *introduces herself to* Mary *and ALL the other women, and the audience, saying with outstretched hand:*

Preti: Hi, I'm Preti!

Mary: Yes, you are pretty!
Are you American?

Preti: No!
I'm pretty!

Tolulu *continues to take Polaroids. She finishes shaking hands with everyone and dusts herself down.* Preti *sniffs and* Tolulu *snaps another photo of her.* Preti *exits to the Red Room.*

Bernie (*sitting on the bench*): How do I look like this?

Mary: Ridiculo!

Bernie *revolves on the Art Gallery bench, she is in her own world and enjoying the sensation of revolving round and round. The guests walk around her to look at her.*

Tuccia *requests a particular "cut" from Dave. She undresses by taking off her Wellington boots first and socks, and pouring water through her "watertight" sieve.*

Bernie, Mary *and* Tolulu *join in and clap.*

She becomes a party animal and dances into the Red Room where she thinks the party is happening.

The structure of the action changes from this line.

Tolulu *continues to take photographs and* Mary *researches the sexual habits of the guests and the emancipation of women at the end of the twentieth century.*

<u>9.50/11.50</u> *A helicopter is heard taking off from the roof of Clissold House (1 minute 30 seconds).*

Searchlights flood the Art Gallery, sound room and Red Room with light.

The party extras stand on the lawn; silhouettes looking up at the helicopter leaving the roof of Clissold House.

The guests are ushered into the sound room one at a time by steward and Mary.

Tolulu *is in the sound room with Dave (sound tech).*

The chandelier has dropped from the ceiling and has one lightbulb shining brightly.

The guests enter the Red Room where they see Preti *lying against the wall as if passed out. They file past and look out of the windows at the spotlit bodies standing on the lawn.*

Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane, 2001

Score for Keyworx live mediated performance demonstration

(NB For full background on the process-based making and "good practice testing" of the Keyworx Programme, ViewHear, The SMARTshell and other related artist-made technology tools, see Goodman and Milton, 2003a/2004.)

Sphinx/Mediatheque with Fragments and Monuments

3.45 PROJECTIONS	STAGING
	lights down, clear the stage, set up stool projection up LX specials: ladder, treads Microphone Sue (ladder) and Jessica (stage)
	Jessica and Jo enter Cochrane Sue up ladder Mya to treads Vesna on stool on stage Jo wanders as Saint Hildegund
Brigit Riley Add Twiggy 1, 2, 3	
Pina Bausch running Dressing room smoking Audience arrive 1, 2	
Dressing room sex Vesna and Jessica dance Red shoes 1	Sue monologue
All above out/keep red shoes	
John Waters 1, add red shoes 2, 3	
Tired dancing Brigit Riley and stays up	Jessica monologue
Theatre doors open	House lights up

Appendix D

Anna Birch and Madelon Schwirtz
interviewed by Kate Pahl
21 July 2000

This interview took place after Di's Midsummer Night Party *(2000), when Kate Pahl, who had seen the show, offered to interview us. Pahl had also seen the previous shows in the trilogy and is herself an academic, teacher and writer interested in cultural production at all its many levels. She has collaborated on performance projects with me in the past, as writer for* Prison Baby *(1987), a one-woman show about being pregnant in Holloway Prison, north London.*

KP It's Friday 21st July and Anna and Madelon are sitting in my sitting room, with Kate Pahl, and we just talked about what we're going to talk about. We'll start with thinking about the work that Anna and Madelon have been doing and I was interested, Madelon, you said that this was the last work, which was called,

MS *Di's Midsummer Night Party.*

KP Yes. Was it the third in a trilogy?

MS That's right.

KP Now I was really interested in that idea of a trilogy and I wanted to have a description from you both, maybe one and then the other or together, about trilogy. Let's start with the first one – what was it called again?

MS *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!*, and it's based on two theatrical characters out of two different plays: one is *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg, the Swedish playwright, and the other one is Adela, one of the characters of *The House of Bernarda Alba* written by Frederico Garcia Lorca, and my interest at that time, with similar background in the way that they were both committing suicide at the end of their plays, to see what would happen if I were to give them a different destiny. First of all I wanted to work with somebody who

understands text and is interested in text theatre, to see whether we could work with this theme to make a performance happen – to see what happens if you put those two characters and give them a new context, a new script, a new destiny.

KP This was in the railway carriage.

MS Yes.

KP I did see this, Anna, I saw this at your house and I remember it was done in a very specific space in a railway carriage and a lot of the emphasis was on the materiality of the performance.

AB That's right, it was a performance installation so Madelon built the railway carriage in an art gallery in St Martins.

KP I remember all this. In fact I have seen it. There was an inside and an outside of it.

I've seen it. One of the things I liked about that, and I found very interesting, was the materiality and the focus on in fact, stuff, I mean it was very filled with stuff. Can you talk a bit about that, maybe Anna, or either of you, because I'm very interested in how it came about, that staged – stuff.

AB Okay, that's quite interesting, because for me as a director I usually work in the proscenium arch and the audience relationship is, the arrangement, is like that – the audience watch something through the proscenium arch. With the first piece that Madelon and I did, the audience sat in a railway carriage, which was built from recycled silkscreens and housed in an art gallery, so immediately you've got a different relationship to the audience. It was also very interesting that the piece was housed in an art gallery, so it was a performance installation.

The audience entered the railway carriage and they experienced a performance around them, but just with two actors. They were both physical actors who improvised their texts, and that text was researched and resourced from their own reading. One of them was a specialist in Lorca anyway, she really liked Lorca, and the other one was very keen on Strindberg. One of them, Lucy Borden, was cast as the Strindberg character Miss Julie, and that character was a size 10, very attractive, fair actress. The other actress, who played Adela, Tracy Bickley, is a black actor and very physical, at that time almost a stunt performer, so the two actors were very contrasting and that's one of the things that we've continued to do.

The other thing that came out of that was that there was a section of the piece that was inside the carriage, and then the doors and windows were burst open and the finale of the piece was outside the carriage.

KP That emphasis on inside and outside comes all the way through your work and I was really struck by the last piece, in which the actual, I felt that the really exciting aspect of it was the use of space and the way that you used the inside

and the outside of this house in the park. Do you want to talk a bit more about that, either of you, this concept of inside and outside?

AB In the first piece, *Dogs*, what I liked most is that we kept the audience in a carriage and the doors of the gallery were the doors of the carriage, so they weren't aware that they were in an art gallery. I had actually created a black box in a white art gallery. So the audience come in, sit down, everything is dark, you have only lights inside this black box so you are not aware of what is around you, the actors jump on, the show starts, action between the two, the two leave because I have made two extra doors; they leave the train, say goodbye to their audience, but also they created a scene.

She used the door as the door of her house, so the door of the train became the door of her house, and she said, "Come in and let's have a party." So she then looked through the windows, inside, looked at the audience – the guests who were the passengers, so they have been given a role as well, and she said "Let's have a party," and suddenly the windows of the train became the windows of her house. So it's that sort of ambiguity isn't it, it's a double meaning.

KP You actually put your audience in the position of being at a party in all three of the works, and actually it's always very interesting to go to because you actually end up being part of the performance, and that's interesting, as a person who goes to things. I don't know if you want to talk about that.

AB I was going to say something about that. It's interesting talking to you Kate, about that, because the theme of the party is something that goes through Fragments and Monuments pieces – and I think we need to be reminded that this last piece, *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, is being made in 2000 and obviously in the autumn of this year, 1999, which seems like a lifetime ago, running up to the millennium celebrations on December 31st 1999 going on to January 1st 2000. That was half of the research process time for *Di's Midsummer Night Party* and it was very significant that everyone was getting ready and questioning each other about what they were going to do for the millennium, and we produced finally *Di's Party* for Stoke Newington Festival 2000 and that was June, just over a month ago.

You would almost have thought that the millennium had never happened, and I think that that was something that Fragments and Monuments took on, and we used our own research from our own parties to feed this process of devising this recent piece, and the idea of the party is a useful device for us because it is a levelling process. You haven't got some people who are watching and some people who are watched, although that relationship, the watcher and the watched, is a cornerstone of our work and something that we probably need to talk about, but it does enable us to bring our guests/audience into a different participating and interactive relationship with the work.

KP So that's very interesting. I'm interested about this relationship between watcher and watched. I mean, you talked to Madelon, and it's very interesting, about the actors looking in on the audience from the outside in the railway, and in the second one, you have the audience getting into a coach, and

I remember getting quite observed in that because I actually did something, I don't know what I did, I didn't do what you're supposed to do, I think I cracked a joke or something, but the expectations of the audience are slightly unsettled through your performances and the audience has a sort of role. The third performance was interesting, because I was with a baby and that always has an interesting effect, I feel. Can you say a bit more about that, about how the audience is construed?

AB Okay, so for the third piece, *Di's Party*, the audience were invited to "Di's Midsummer Night Party" by Fragments and Monuments and in that way, we gave out invitations to selected members of the public, and Madelon was very clear about this. The invitations were very carefully designed, they had a high production quality; for example at the Stoke Newington Festival, we didn't just flypost our stuff, we gave them to individual members of the Stoke Newington community and said, "Have you been invited to *Di's Midsummer Night Party*?" And people would say, "No." "Well would you like to be invited? Here's an invitation," so there was a personal interaction right from the beginning, and the audiences for our work are small. For *Di's Party* it was 35 in the audience, rising to 40 on some nights. Every night it was sold out, and every night the guests had a glass of wine and I think felt that they'd experienced something that was different too, there was a bit of a party that was a celebration and that was important.

Obviously the thread of Diana as an icon, as a blonde size 10 icon, as a popular culture icon, goes through our work, for Miss Julie who was in the first and the second show and then Diana, who came into the second show, *Lovely Stones*, and we were quite concerned a year ago that people would say to us, "Ooh, is it going to be tasteful?" Debbie Shewell[46] said about it, "This has to be a celebration," and she'd seen *Lovely Stones*, I think she felt it was a bit dark or a bit grim. She was a bit worried about what we might do with *Di's Party*, but I think we managed through our process to actually celebrate a life of somebody, a woman, in a very interesting way, and I think it's quite hard to get a finger on actually what the experience of *Di's Party* was for the actors.

KP I think one of the things that I felt was that it was the time that was very interesting. You played with the idea of going through the night. I think that for both *Di's Party* and *Lovely Stones* there was an element of tragedy. I was particularly struck by the image of the car in *Lovely Stones* and the image of the actors standing outside the helicopter in *Di's Midsummer Night Party*. There is tragedy there, and I'm quite interested in that because I think that your depiction of tragedy is actually very powerful because it's very visual, and I don't know how those scenes were set up but they were very impressive. The car was very big, there was a gunshot, in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* there were regimental soldiers in black and there was the helicopter and there was the sense of quite big tragedy and I think those were very effective moments. It would be quite interesting to hear how you set those up. People mention those to me as being a very strong experience. Do you want to talk

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[46] Debbie Shewell is a drama director for television and film (a former theatre director who ran the pressure group Women and Entertainment with Katrina Duncan in the 1980s). She is now head of drama for RTF in London

about that Madelon, how you set up those moments of tragedy?

MS Well, the approach of the extras for instance, I had very clearly. I worked with them all in black, like a chorus, like a Greek chorus, and I think then you start creating something really visual, like one language, and the helicopter was an idea from the beginning, wasn't it? And then we worked with Sheila Ghelani[47] and she used to choreograph and she worked with them on the lawn, and then from that moment we were inside and we could see from the way she was working with them, first as a group on the lawn, moving together, and then she spread them all over the lawn; I thought, that's it!

And then at first we thought the helicopter light should come inside the house, but because of technical reasons, the weather wasn't so good, so we had this technical problem of having those big spotlights outside, and the technician said let's have them inside and see what happens. So he put them inside and started shining them onto those extras, and I thought that's it, isn't it! And I like that way of working, that things happen and things evolve.

AB I think that's absolutely right and I think it's interesting because the level of tragedy, when you were talking about that it almost brought tears to my eyes, because I find the work really, really emotional. But the thing that saves it, I hope, from tipping over, I think the reason that we're onto something at the moment, is because if I say special effects, we're very interested in special effects, and taking the black Ford Escort into that car park and splashing the red paint on it and seeing how that worked was really cathartic. It's a pragmatic thing, it's a practical thing, it's a make and do thing, and we don't really think about the other side of it.

In terms of these Anthony Gormley-type statues in front of Clissold House[48], we looked at his documentary on television, we discussed it, we knew that something was there that we wanted to reference for our work, and then the collaboration with these extras, they were all people from Stoke Newington. There were some dancers in there but basically we sourced them from the park, from asking people in Stoke Newington if they would like to be involved from notices hung up in the park, and those extras have gone on to socialise, to be friends, and have all found something from the experience of being in *Di's Midsummer Night Party* which has been really positive.

So there are many, many different levels to this, and I think the epic level of those images in our work is something that we find very exciting. It's quite interesting that when we often talk about our work we talk about developing the comedy, and we'd like to have more laughs etc, but actually I think that large-scale epic stuff is something that we're really excited about.

MS And also not being too illustrative. Like the car with Lucy Burden in it, I didn't really want to present Diana with a car crash in a tunnel but I wanted to have a car in it because a car is a masculine vehicle, and aggressive, and it's all

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47 Sheila Ghelani, choreographer and PhD student in dance at Surrey University and performer recently seen with the Robert Paccitti company

48 Tenuta Diana is the name given to Clissold House by Fragments and Monuments

about transport, our work, anyway, so why not use her car? I put it together that way rather than thinking, oh the car crash. No, I don't think that way, I think of transport, the car as a metaphor.

KP That's interesting because I've been thinking about the way I do field work, which is very similar. I don't decide I want a certain kind of family, but I move into a situation where this family appears, and I think that's a very nice way of describing, and that's what I would call your epistemology. It's a kind of sense of what you're doing with the material you're working with, and that you're not necessarily imposing upon it. You're looking at it as it arises, and then finding out what you can do with it, so this arose and then you set the scene and I think that's something to hold on to, I would say, in your work. As an outsider I think that's very key and exciting, because it's on the cusp, really, also of work like Richard Long's, which – kind of things fall, things happen, and then the kind of more devised pieces.

Do you want to move on and talk more about the ideas, or do you want to carry on talking about the form, because I don't want to miss out things that you've not talked about so far. We've talked about the party, we've talked about the big choreography. And then one of the things I noticed in all of them was a strong emphasis on feminism and where the female characters are going, really. Certainly in modern culture, what do you do with a female character when you've got these icons like Diana, who died, and maybe you want to talk a bit about how you dealt with that, because that I think is a more troubling aspect in a way of what you're dealing with, and one of the feelings I've had at times is that there isn't, perhaps, a solution. I don't know what you think to that. In terms of feminism really, your personal feminism and how that infuses your work.

MS Well, that started when I did my BA in the Netherlands, choosing to work with Lorca's play *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and it was about women who were kept in their house for ages because of their father's death, and wanting to escape. I really felt very strongly about that house, having been inside, but at the same time there is a patio and that was there outside, but I thought it was still inside, so I was dealing with inside/outside from doing my BA, and then I did *Les Girls*, another play about Jean Genet's *The Maids*, also about women being indoors wanting to go out, there's a sort of line. And then I did *Trojan Women* and I am now going to the Netherlands to do a television programme and it's about a girls' band and it never stops. I think what's this? All the time I'm confronted with this.

AB Shall I pick that up, because there's a few things that occurred to me and I think it's a really big question. One thing is the popular aspect of our work, and it's interesting that Madelon's moving it into a television project now, because there's a lot to say about this really. One is that we've just cut the rough cut of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* and we're keen to get it broadcast on television, and that's a mass communication to thousands in the audience, and we see that as a contrast to our 35 for our live productions – and I'll try to thread back to the feminism thing because obviously that's the top of my agenda – but there's something interesting happening here and it's something to do with having the opportunity of making the work.

The discussions around gender and feminism were in the early stages of making *Di's Midsummer Night Party*, they were in the early stages of commissioning *Lovely Stones* and they were in the early stages of Madelon's and my first collaboration, *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!* We describe the work as developing gender, language in performance and it seems to me that the language of gender is very – it's painful, it's not an easy language, it never has been easy. It's even more difficult at the moment because of the impact of mass culture, and it's impossible to ignore, and we try and keep a dialogue going with the popular culture and our own sensibilities as women at the beginning of the new millennium and we had a few attempts at this last project to cast men, and in fact finally we did cast Singh Johar. He's a classically trained Baharatian dancer from Delhi and he brought in a language which, in collaboration with the other four members of the company, has started – I think we're starting to find something that's really going to take us forward and it is a combination for discussion, but I think that the biggest lesson that we've learnt is that it's really to do with practice and process, and I think that that's really interesting because I know that when I... in the early 1980s I used to go on about practice and process the whole time. I think it's something we really lost in the Thatcher years, and the Royal Court was very literary-based, and I think collaboration is really where we're at now.

I think that does give the possibility of developing new languages and I don't think that there are any answers, and I think that we're past the stage of looking for answers, and our biggest desire is really to be given the opportunity to create more work and to record it and to distribute it, and thereby help to feed the debates about gender in the new millennium.

Appendix E

Overview of practice-based research workshops conducted at the Cochrane Theatre & MA Scenography Black Box Studio

Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London
January – July 2002

See showreel on DVD-Rom

The Cochrane Theatre experiments

This research experiment took two physical theatre spaces – the Cochrane Theatre with its proscenium arch and the Black Box studio of the Scenography group at Central Saint Martins- and explored their relationship to one another, in terms of both physical and 'virtual' spatial relationships. The place of the actor in both spaces, viscerally and virtually, was the starting point for the exercise. The group attempted to deconstruct the Cochrane Theatre space as a space and as a site for performance, in order to discover alternative ways the space can be utilised for performance, different from those used in the conventional end-on proscenium-arch theatre space.

Two strategies were employed to help in this process and they can be divided into two categories. The first was to conduct tests on the broadband installation at the Cochrane Theatre and studio space. This installation allows streaming via the worldwide web between the theatre and the studio. The second strategy drew on my theatre practice developing new plays and included experiments with cross-dressing

and cross-gender casting.

Schedule

The schedule started in January 2002 and continued until July 2002 for a series of test days arranged with the theatre manager Deidre Malynn. The SMARTlab (a research centre at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, directed by Dr Lizbeth Goodman) hosted a week of performance and seminars in July 2002 titled Mediatheque[49], which I, in my capacity as researcher/performance and media outreach coordinator for SMARTlab, helped to programme with Dr Lizbeth Goodman and Deidre Malynn. Work in progress from my experiments was previewed and documented during this event.

Jeanetta Cochrane party

The Cochrane Theatre celebrates its 40th birthday in 2004 and my project was designed to celebrate this occasion. The process of deconstructing the theatre was intended to lead to re-envisioning the potential uses of the space for performance. The history of the theatre (founded by Jeanette Cochrane in 1964) was researched, making it possible for her contribution to theatre *herstory* to be celebrated.

Brief background

The collaboration with Madelon Schwirtz (trained at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design) impacted on my process of making theatre in a number of ways. The most distinct change is that I now work outside theatre spaces in found locations,

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[49] European-wide conference including a one-day event with Sphinx Theatre Company, a London-based women's theatre company (previously called the Women's Theatre Group), artistic director Sue Parish

which leads to site-specific performance and includes projection, laptop presentation, website location and site-based performance.

The short film of *Di's Midsummer Night Party (2001)* was presented across media formats, as follows: the live performance of June 2000 was followed in June 2001 by an outdoor screening of *Di's Midsummer Night Party*. The film was back-projected onto Clissold House, Stoke Newington (the site of the live performance) to an audience of over 100 people. Subsequently a CD-Rom of the film was produced and was shown on a G4 Mac laptop to small audiences at the autumn 2001 Practice as Research in Performance conference at Bristol University. Extracts from the film were available on the SMARTlab website and shown at film festivals.

Studio space equipped with digital video and editing facility

The cross-format presentation of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* led me to develop a specification for a studio space equipped with digital video and an editing facility. The studio space used in live non-mediated performance was no longer adequate for the performance work I produce and it became essential that I had access to and could draw on multi-media facilities as a part of the rehearsal/development process. Performance research experiments, on selected play-texts rehearsed and performed in this carefully constructed live and mediated environment, enabled me and the personnel listed below to experiment with new languages (both live and mediated) as an integrated part of the production development process.

Cochrane Theatre and studio production development overview

Aim of project: To create the opportunity to discover how this special rehearsal set up implementing live and mediated languages can be developed. The use of the proscenium arch was challenged and new boundaries drawn between the performer and spectator with the aim of reinvigorating conventional dramaturgical and scenographic languages. The geography of the theatre space was investigated with actors and multi-media tools.

Background research on the methodology used to develop this project

A set of short films was to be produced to cover the test day sessions and performance outcomes resulting from this project. I researched the following CD-Roms produced by artists working in the live and mediated environment:

> *Mouthplace* (1997), created by Jools Gilson-Ellis, funded by the Arts Council of England through a commission from the Department of Film, Television and Broadcasting; Dartington College of Arts Research Unit; distributed by Frog Peak Music.
>
> *Windowsninetyeight* (1998), produced and directed by Ruth Gibson and Bruno Martelli in association with ShoeVegas Arts & Media and Igloo, Funded by the Arts Council of England.

New writing in the multi-media environment

In his 1997 production of *Blue Heart* by Caryl Churchill, Stafford-Clark managed to produce a "demonstration" rather than a "presentation" of the relationship between some of the characters. In this case the verbal actions, used by the actors to analyse their script in rehearsal, flew through the proscenium arch almost as though they were news headlines describing the characters' relationship as they were in the process of unfolding moment to moment. The play "delivers itself" as a kind of pastiche of a kitchen sink drama, while the dialogue and action are deliberately, strategically repeated through various devices. *Blue Heart* reduces the canvas opened up by *The*

Skriker (1994) and *Mad Forest* (1990), which are big plays with depth, history, colour, and large casts. The fairies and the blood of *The Skriker* and the mad global excesses of *Mad Forest* were used to expose the absurdity and the excess of the late 20th-century global experience.

The texts were chosen because they demonstrate the key theatrical strategies about which this study is based. In *Blue Heart*, Churchill writes two plays – *Heart's Desire* and *Blue Kettle* – and publishes them under the book title *Blue Heart*. In *Heart's Desire*, the action revolves around the repeated routine when a family waits for their daughter to return from Australia. The table is laid and relaid, and this repeated action provides the pulse for the script. There are six characters in the play plus a group of children, but three characters remain onstage and participate as the core of the repeated routine. These characters are Brian, Alice and Maisie; Brian and Alice are married and Maisie is Brian's sister. The repeated routine in *Heart's Desire* begins to deconstruct the kitchen sink drama and comment on the theatrical language of such drama, which is central to the tradition of British new writing theatre, from *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne (1956) to the present day.

In *Blue Kettle* the language of the dialogue begins to undo itself, and this process also suggests a deconstruction of the text. The seeds of deconstruction are therefore sewn by the writer in *Blue Heart*, and it is my contention that the selected use of new media tools can respond to this writing with an imaginative and potentially gender-aware approach.

Method of project: extracts from the following plays were rehearsed – *Some Explicit Polaroids* by Mark Ravenhill (1999), *Top Girls* (1982), *Blue Heart* (1997), *The Skriker* (1994) and *Cloud Nine* (1979), all by Caryl Churchill – the live/mediated studio setup was tested. In this environment I began to create an archive of selected work to demonstrate the relationship of live and mediated performance on selected play-texts. The performance experiments revolved around the construction and communication of gender. The themes of cross-dressing and cross-gender casting emerge in the plays above and I investigated the theatrical language surrounding these conventions in a new media performance framework. Cross-dressing and cross-gender casting were used to research the boundaries of gender, to investigate our understanding of gender in a cross-platform multi-media framework.

The development team, which includes the personnel listed below, looked at the theme of cross-dressing and cross-gender casting from multiple perspectives – for instance, the history of cross-dressing in the theatre, breeches parts (see *Gender on the Modern Stage*, 2001 research pack by Anna Birch for Sphinx Theatre Company). Costume was sourced from the London Institute wardrobe and in-depth research took place to investigate the potential of specific costumes to blur gender through choreographic, scenographic and dramaturgical working methods. This research was then applied to a selected scene from one of the above play-texts.

The process generated short scenarios directed, choreographed, designed and performed in both live and mediated spaces. Where we needed to understand more about the audience/spectator relationship, a specially invited audience saw the process work.

The performance experiments were transferred onto CD-Rom, to be used in an experimental process that investigated how the readings of gender change in different presentation modes, such as laptop, outdoor screening and indoor screening. In this way the archive built up was documented and can be drawn on as starting points for future research and development.

Summary: This intervention into the boundaries that surround live and mediated performance drew on theatrical resources (actors, costume, play-text, cross-gender casting) and the material physicality of the proscenium arch and juxtaposed against multi-media tools. This juxtaposition of the old and the new, the tried and tested and the fragile and unstable set up the kind of resonances to push my creative practice forward.

Cochrane Theatre test session no 1

Thursday 24 January 2002, 10am-4pm, Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre and Black Box MA Scenography studio, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

A series of test days planned and directed by me made up this project and the

schedule for test day one was as follows.

Aim:

To test the new broadband installation in the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre and Black Box scenography studio

To include streaming via the internet to connect the two spaces

Personnel:

Stefan Kuppers, architect and SMARTlab researcher

Drama students from Drama Centre, 176 Prince of Wales Road, London: Duguld Gunn, Stephanie Ratcliff, Danielle Urbas, Perri Snowdon

SMARTlab interns Jana Riedel and Basil Thuillard

Adam Carree, Cochrane technical manager

Equipment:

Vaio (pc compatibale highspeed laptop computer) with wireless/airport card fitted,

Kritter cam, G4 laptop with Kritter cam fitted, tripod

Documentation:

Day one was filmed on two digital video cameras, operated by Basil and Jana. This enabled the Cochrane stage and the Black Box studio to be covered. It was agreed that Basil and Jana would meet Anna to watch the rushes at a later stage and decide at this point how to edit the material. Anna explained to the camera operators that she was creating a set of documentation to be formatted onto CD-Rom.

Plan:

To test wires/cabling, sound/audio and wireless/airport possibility

To introduce the actors to the space and the schedule for the day

To run a physical warm-up with the actors

To introduce the actors to the play-texts

To run a series of experiments with the play-texts via webcam and to stream content between the theatre and the studio

To debrief the actors and crew to discuss possibilities for live and mediated performance

Debrief to cover:

Feedback on broadband installation

Use of content, for example play-text fragments, projected text, dialogue and dramatic relationship in mediated space

Can mediation of image and sound help create a domestic and epic distinction in the performance spaces (both mediated and live)?

Discuss next stage for tests

Introduction to the actors

The actors – third-year students Duguld Gunn, Stephanie Ratcliffe, Danielle Urbas and Perri Snowdon – met for the first time at 10am on Thursday 24 January. I introduced the project to them as follows.

I explained that the test day was the first to be run in the Cochrane Theatre, attached to CSM, and asked the students if they knew the Cochrane Theatre. In the autumn of 2001, the Drama Centre (London) became affiliated to the London Institute. The Cochrane Theatre has the distinction of being founded by Jeanetta Cochrane, and I said to the actors that I anticipated the need to find out more about her and the story of how she founded the theatre.

The students were asked in brief about their training at the Drama Centre. The training is Stanislavski-based and broadly method training, which is delivered with discipline and rigour. The Drama Centre has a reputation for producing actors who adhere to their training throughout their careers. This actor training is rumoured to be very demanding on the psyche, in particular of young actors. I used the experience of the trainee actors as a starting point for the day's experiments.

I explained that my overarching aim was to deconstruct the Cochrane Theatre with the help of actors and the use of multi-media tools. I broke this process down as follows: The theatre and studio spaces were fitted with multi-media tools. For test day one, we used the technology iVisit (http://198.173.255.76/ real time video conferencing), which comprises a webcam rig attached to laptop computers. Actors will be asked to work with these by choosing a monologue and selected dialogues from play-texts.

I explained that for the female to perform and be seen, she needs to be pulled out of the multiple frames that the spectator looks through. The site-based production and subsequent multiple format presentations of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* explore the possibilities that emerge by breaking the frame of realism and begin to suggest that site, devised methods and projection as well as costume and masquerade can help in this project. I discussed how the cross-platform readings of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* suggest how the gender readings in live and mediated performance material might develop.

The media of playwriting, film and TV were introduced in this session, with examples of case studies that could be seen to develop the impact of 'gender in performance' shared with the group. The introduction finished with a background to gender and theatricality, intended to demonstrate the ways in which the female body in performance (and many different female bodies, by extension) is framed as a relatively new phenomenon in the history of theatre, thereby carrying with it a specific set of issues, questions, and phenomenological assumptions and interests. Elin Diamond's *Unmaking Mimesis* (1997) was introduced at the end of my introduction to set the theoretical framework. I explained that the intertextual reading proposed by Diamond uses feminist theory and Brechtian theory to help a theatre-specific feminist criticism to emerge. I said I would endeavour to demonstrate, with examples from my own practice and specific case studies, what I meant, and meant the group to discover through exploration of, the process I called 'blurring the boundaries' (by which, I explained, I meant-in shorthand form-the complex process of challenging expectations of theatrical and cultural traditions and assumptions about

the body, the female, and the performative: through exploring the boundary areas where our expectations and new ideas blur and then emerge more clearly in one direction or another as a result of that temporary 'blur'). This introduction set the scene for exploration in the workshop of the concept of the construction of 'gender as ideology' to be understood in the process-based context of performance practice, in both live and mediated forms.

Warm-up:

Yoga and Alexander exercises were used to prepare the actors to be receptive to gender work. The exercises helped to increase the actors' awareness of gender, both in their own consciousness and their awareness about working with each other, and in the space around these issues.

Play-texts and multi-media tools:

The play-texts are all written within the last 10 years. This is important because the technological revolution has accelerated since the early 1990s and it was the intention of the project to explore the impact of this technological development on play making.[50] The interface between actor/play-text and technology was explored here in a unique experiment where new rehearsal and development techniques were discovered.

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50 These ideas were examined at Mediatheque in the seminar "Theatre, Gender and Beyond: Dressing up with new technologies for playwriting and performance", with presentations from Maria Pattinson (www.theplaysthething.com/crew/maria.htm) and Sue Parish (www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/index1.cfm)

Sample experiment: *The Skriker*

The Skriker was performed by Perri and Stephanie via the Kritter webcam and iVisit software. Perri was in the Black Box and Stephanie on the Cochrane stage. The laptops were set up on a lectern and the actors each stood behind with a good view of the screen and access to the microphone. Perri said the first line from the extract from *The Skriker* (p 31).

Perri as Skriker:	Better butter bit of better bitter but you're better off down her you arse over tit for tattle
Stephanie as Skriker:	arsy versy
Perri as Skriker:	verse or prose or amateur status the nation wide open wide world hurled hurtling hurting hurt very badly.
Stephanie as Skriker:	wars whores hips hip hoorays it to the ground glass.

Evaluation of the experiments

The process of acting through the webcam emphasised the separation between actors. Acting through the webcam offers a way into discussing the effort and skill made by the actor to connect and respond to create performance. The cross-gender casting of *The Skriker,* played by a man and a woman making the effort to communicate as a single character, helped to deconstruct the Skriker character.

Cochrane Theatre test session no 2

Thursday March 14 and Friday March 15

With the same setup in place as test day one, I ran the following experiments:

- An installation was made from 1960s clothes (from London Institute wardrobe) and streamed via webcam from the Black Box studio.

- Vesna Milanovic[51], dressed in masculine clothes, danced with her own image projected on the cyclorama. She investigated the stage and proscenium arch, finding the geometry of the space to be "masculine" (her words). The proscenium arch in the Cochrane Theatre is solid and impenetrable; our discussion led onto the difficulty this architecture gave the female performer. Milanovic's research evolved around everyday languages of movement, not dance. She entered the stage as a man taking control of the space and the camera.

- Milanovic, dressed in black and white 1960s dress and shoes, danced to the music of 1960s pop icon Dusty Springfield. It was harder for Milanovic to control the gaze in this female costume.

Plans for further tests as a result of the de-briefing sessions for tests 1 and 2:

- To introduce the cross-gender element to this project by asking the students to swap their clothes, as a way into deconstructing gender in performance. Actors to swap clothes and enter the space in a new set of clothes, to be recorded on DV and analysed later (on the ViewHear storyboard).

- To record text as an experiment by typing fragments through iVisit on the keyboard and as a fallback if audio fails. To play with different kinds of repeats, since in iVisit, text fragments can be repeated as text and as sound. To project

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[51] Milanovic is a dancer from former Yugoslavia based in the department of performing arts at the University of Surrey, writing her PhD in Dance. She has designed research project "The PORT Project: Performance Online in Real-Time", exploring the possibilities for developing new performance vocabularies arising from the creation and study of digital image processing in performance making

text and investigate the possibility of Text Rain[52] software.

- Repeating text as a mantra deconstructs the text and opens up possibilities for multi-media experiments.

- To examine process as product and what this maxim means in this environment. Can the process become the product, can the spectator interact with the visual and written text?

- Research the Cochrane Theatre from an architectural and spatial point of view. To lead the space investigations with reference to earlier experiments initiated with a female student group for the Extended Body MA (run at Surrey University through INMPR in January 2001). The polarities of external and internal space were starting points for introductory gender work where the feminine and masculine qualities the actors bring into the space can be drawn on in a creative way.

- To attempt to link the process of the actor to the play-text fragments and history and geography of the space; consider the actor process as a separate text (not a hidden text) to be discovered and demonstrated in the same way as the other elements are treated. The Drama Centre students are very clear about their process as far as I am aware and should therefore be excellent at working in a

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52 "Text Rain is a playful interactive installation that blurs the boundary between the familiar and the magical. Participants in the Text Rain installation use the familiar instrument of their bodies, to do what seems magical - to lift and play with falling letters that do not really exist." (Camille Utterback and Romy Achituv, www.siggraph.org/artdesign/gallery/S00/interactive/thumbnail21.html)

process-conscious way and able to demonstrate their process.

- To examine the possibility of set design for *Blue Heart/Heart's Desire, The Skriker, Top Girls* and *Some Explicit Polaroids*, and the implications of this play-text material rehearsed in a multi-media environment.

A description of the Mediatheque presentation

The following is taken from the SMARTlab programme for the Mediatheque (a week-long event held at SMARTlab in July 2002, as the final presentation in practical form of a two year Information Society Technologies Project funded through the Framework V programme: Project RADICAL- Research Agendas Developed in Creative Arts Lab (the outcomes of the project as a whole are documented on the SMARTlab website: www.smartlabcentre.com, and are also published in book form (Goodman and Milton, 2003/4).:

Fragments and Monuments: Keyworx Experiment
Artistic director: Anna Birch
Production assistant: Jana Riedel, SMARTlab intern
Performers: Cairo Cannon, Jo Crilly, Jessica Gerger, Vesna Milanovic, Sue Maund, Mya Henebry, Faith Tingle

Anna Birch has been running tests in the Cochrane Theatre to explore the possibilities of live and mediated performance, researching and developing the potential of the theatre dressing rooms, staircases, entrances and backstage areas as her site. This performance research is a part of her practice-based PhD submission to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. This piece researched the 1960s social and cultural history of the theatre, which was originally founded in 1964 by Jeanetta Cochrane, head of costume design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. Her recent site-based performance *Di's Midsummer Night Party* (2000) is now available as a 10-minute film on CD-Rom and will be shown during Mediatheque.

Transhistorical Characters

Cochrane Experiment

18.1

18.2

Figure 18.1 Jaqueline Bouvier Kennedy in *Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane* (2002)
Figure 18.2 Jaqueline Bouvier Kennedy and Jeanetta Cochrane in *Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane* (2002)

Keyworx projection: *Celebrate Jeanetta Cochrane* (2002)

Figure 19

Film → Keyworx software

Keyworx[53] software was applied to the film of *Di's Midsummer Night Party (2001).*

The software provides an editing facility to reframe the film. Jana Riedel operated the Keyworx software and I ran the live edit in front of the audience at Mediatheque.

The Keyworx edit was projected onto a psychlorama in the Cochrane Theatre, Holborn. This theatre (founded in 1963 by Jeanetta Cochrane, theatre designer at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design) is the location of the next phase of research and development work. Bringing *Di's Midsummer Night Party* into the theatre gave me the opportunity to revisit the theatre space in the context of this site-based work, filmed on location.

The application of Keyworx software transformed the film in front of the audience in the theatre. The film was deconstructed by the software into a series of new, random frames of different sizes. I was able to hold onto some frames, such as of Mary Wollstonecraft at the beginning of the film, which remained on screen at the same time as the film unfolded in new frames overlapping each other. New stories and relationships were constructed, putting characters against each other and against the spectator/guests, the park and the house. A key effect was that a frame could be maintained showing the history of the film as it moved forward, creating ghostly hauntings, reminders, transhistorical links and traces.

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[53] Keyworx is a multi-user cross-media synthesiser developed at the Waag Lab of the Society for Old and New Media that allows multiple players to generate, synthesise and process images, sounds and text in real time, within a shared virtual workspace. In our experiments with Keyworx up to now we are single users, but in the future we plan to work online with multiple users (www.keyworx.org)

***Di's Midsummer Night Party*, Keyworx (2002)**

Figure 20

Research points that arose from the Keyworx projection of **Di's Midsummer Night Party** *(2001)*

Wollstonecraft inside and outside the house creates gender visibility by her relationship to the interior and the exterior of the house.

- paving stones signify the audience journey

- audience having a glass of wine in right hand frame and spectator/guests walking up the drive. The past stays with the present, the journey of the audience is recorded and the wine-drinking frame stays up until the house comes into frame, linking the beginning of the journey to the house, making relationships across time and space frames.

- Multiple Mary Wollstonecrafts are juxtaposed against Diana figures in the windows of Clissold House. A single Mary Wollstonecraft frame remains while others unfold as she continues her journey. The anchor of the remaining frame resists the passage of time, holding back the forward flow, reminding us of where we have come from. Wollstonecraft's image stays outside the house, although she is seen walking into the house. In this way the transhistorical character is disembodied; already stretching her materiality by returning to the year 2000, she is now seen in more than two places at once, inside and outside the building. Her relationship to the inside and outside of the building is an emblem of her status as a radical woman, challenging the thresholds of status, shifting her position.

- *Ghostings of Mary Wollstonecraft:* her obituary/life in death material evidence of death, one past life into another

- *The spiral staircase*: the way out stays in the frame, increasing the scale and dimension, suggesting another exit, another reality. The swirling of the staircase/the swirling of the camera work blurs boundaries, creating new spatial relationships.

- The end of a process that seems to be a kind of brainstorm. I re-edit the film text in a random way; the traces of the film are left surrounding the final frame.

Appendix F

Extended Body Practical Workshops

These workshops, which I directed, were run for students of the MA Extended Body:

Gender and new media performance (2001), at the Institute of New Media

Performance Research (director: Dr Lizbeth Goodman), Surrey University.

Gender and Interactive Live Performance
Playing with a different sex, or how to play with gender in performance!

Specific tutorial question:
How can site-based performance help to create a space where gender can be read differently?

Workshop 1: Physicality and Gender

Aims

This workshop is an exploration of what makes up the physical aspects of gender.

What is it about the physicality of the body and the sound of the voice that is

described as feminine or masculine aspects of ourselves?

Workshop

Make two lists, one with the title feminine and the other masculine, and list your

qualities under each title. If you come up with qualities that don't fit under either title

make a separate heading for them.

Now stand up and walk around the room: become aware of your body in the space and make yourself take up as much space as possible, stretch and breath, lie on the floor and stretch across it, stand up tall and stretch to the ceiling.

Relax and shake out and then do the opposite and become as small as possible, try the child pose on the floor face down with your arms round your back, roll over onto your back like a baby and hold your knees close to your body, stand up and take up as little space as possible.

Notice how your breathing is affected in each posture.

To increase personal authority it can be helpful to breathe deeply and to take up more space with your body. Try now to stand in mountain pose (a yoga posture) and breathe deeply. Let your shoulders drop and feel your feet rooted to the floor. Become aware of your centre of gravity and if it feels fairly high try and breathe your centre into a lower position in your belly and pelvic area. Do you feel more in control, stable, unshakeable?

Relax and shake out and come to your natural standing posture.

In this posture register what changes you can detect. How is this posture different from the very big, "take up as much space as you can" body? To the small, as a child, "take up as little space as possible" body?

Standing tall with your shoulders relaxed, breathe in and breathe out on a long "ahhh"

sound. Try this a couple of times until you are making a low, rooted "ahhh" sound that feels as if it is coming from deep inside your belly. How does this sound make you feel?

In mountain pose as before, focus on something in the distance – this is a good exercise to do outside. Breathe in a full chest of air and focus on your breathing and distant focus point.

Change your focus point to something very close to you and analyse how this change of focus affects the relationship you experience to your own body and to the outside world.

Write down your observations in a list and draw together some conclusions for your own records.

The following research exercises can be documented on a DV recorder or camera.

Workshop 2: Representation and Femininity

Aims

To explore how clothes help to describe femininity and masculinity and to experiment with different cocktails of mix and match feminine and masculine dressing. To introduce historical costume and clothing from different periods in history, if available, into the choice of clothing used.

Workshop

Beg, borrow or steal the clothes needed for the following gender research. If you can find theatrical costume or clothing from different periods of history to use in your experimental work this could prove useful:

Working with a partner, dress yourselves up in very feminine clothes and discuss how these make you feel. Write down your observations to come back to later.

Next dress up in men's clothes and discuss the differences that you observe. Discuss with your partner how you looked in both sets of clothing.

Finally, dress in your favourite outfits and analyse why these outfits are your favourites and what they do for your image of yourself.

Workshop 3: Space, Architecture and Representation

Aims

Space, architecture and representation are explored to find out how one element impacts on the other. The aim is to experiment with different juxtapositions, not only of clothing as above, but to find a site or location that adds to the meaning of your choice of clothing or costume.

Workshop

This workshop needs to be done outside and inside and it is particularly useful to have a DV camera to record your research.

Research three or four locations, at least two of which are outside.

In pairs, dress up in clothes of your choice and photograph yourselves in the locations hoe is this different from images created inside.

Analyse the clips of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* and look at the frames of Tolulu inside the house walking upstairs and then again when she performs as a singer and descends the stairs as if in a nightclub. Contrast this image of Tolulu with the Cindy Sherman (2003) -type image of her "backstage" in the doorframe waiting to sing.

Create your own icon and photograph them in an interior location and an exterior location, and analyse the different kinds of images that you create. What effect does the interior location have on your icon? Try a domestic interior location, such as a kitchen, and then contrast this to the composition of the image outside. Locations come in all sorts of different shapes and sizes and each location imparts its own story and history. Try to find some contrasting locations that are full of possibilities.

Research the use of locations in magazines and film photography and look out for locations that contrast with the characters photographed. Analyse how these juxtapositions create meaning, and use this research to help you to construct your own compositions that are full of contrasts and fun to make!

Workshop 4: Di's Midsummer Night Party *applying ViewHear*
Cut your own Di's Midsummer Night Party

Method

A random selection of stills is collected from the digital film as screen grabs. A folder of stills is created that becomes the assets for ViewHear. The user assembles the stills in any order, and text and sound can be added to the storyboard. This transformation of the film enables the user to direct the order of the action and also to introduce new characters into the party by adding new digital stills of locations and characters to the folder.

The new user may add new stills of their choice, for instance the user in a costume attending the party. In this way the editing process is simplified and the control of the editor demonstrated. The message that is constructed from the new versions of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* by applying the ViewHear storyboard shows how the story can be told in different versions with the same resources (digital stills).

Aims

To access a readymade site-based performance that highlights the language of gender. This is used as a basis for more experimental work to play with performance languages that include costume and location.

Workshop

Access the assets of *Di's Midsummer Night Party* through ViewHear and insert a new party guest of your choice:

Preti is the party guest wearing a wraparound skirt and red velvet jacket. Watch how

Preti enters the party. Now you can insert a new party guest to replace Preti. Insert your clip to replace Preti entering through the door into the stairwell.

Create a new Polaroid photo of the new guest that has been taken by Tolulu's camera.

Write a biography and some dialogue for the new party guest you have created.

Appendix G

Playwrights' Curriculae Vitae

Biographies updated as of 1 June 2004

See www.doollee.com for full production details and regular updates

April de Angelis

April De Angelis's work for the stage includes:

Ironmistress (ReSisters Theatre Company, 1989)
The Life and Times of Fanny Hill (Red Shift, 1990)
Crux (Paines Plough, 1990)
Hush (Royal Court, 1992)
Playhouse Creatures (Sphinx, 1993), revived at the Old Vic in 1997 and West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2003
Soft Vengeance (Graeae, 1993)
The libretto for *Flight* (Glyndebourne Opera, 1997)
The Positive Hour (Out of Joint and Hampstead, 1997)
Warwickshire Testimony (Royal Shakespeare Company, 1999)
A Laughing Matter (Out of Joint and Royal National Theatre, 2002-03)
Headstrong (Royal National Theatre Education Department, 2003)

She is currently under commission from the Royal Court and the RSC (Royal Shakespare Company), and is also developing a new script called *Speaking to Terrorists* with Max Stafford-Clark (Out of Joint).

Caryl Churchill

Caryl Churchill was in post as resident dramatist at the Royal Court from 1974-75. She also spent much of the 1970s and 1980s working with the collaborative theatre groups Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment. Her work during this period is well documented, and has been hailed as formative to the development of new writing for British Theatre in general, and for British Women's Theatre in particular. Her body of work includes:

Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (1976)
Vinegar Tom (1976)
Cloud Nine (1979)
Three More Sleepless Nights (1980)
Top Girls (1982)
Fen (1983)
Softcops (1984)
A Mouthful of Birds (1986), written with David Lan
Serious Money (1987)
Ice Cream (1989)
Mad Forest (1990)
The Skriker (1994)
Translation of Seneca's *Thestes* (1994)
Hotel (1997)
Blue Heart (1997)
Far Away (2000)
A Number (2002)

Timberlake Wertenbaker

Timberlake Wertenbaker was resident writer for Shared Experience (1983) and the Royal Court Theatre (1984-85).

Her plays include:

New Anatomies, first staged at the ICA in London (1981)
Abel's Sister (1984)
The Grace of Mary Traverse (1985)
The Love of the Nightingale (1989)
Three Birds Alighting on a Field (1992)
Credible Witness (2001)

She is best known for *Our Country's Good* (1988), based on the novel *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally: first performed at the Royal Court in 1988. This play was awarded the Laurence Olivier/BBC Award for Best New Play and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best New Foreign Play, and was nominated for six Tony Awards (www.tonyawards.com).

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1998 *Lovely Stones*, presented by Fragments and Monuments, Scenofest 1998, Central St Martins College of Art and Design. Site-specific performance in bus/warehouse site. Written by Janet Goddard, Directed by Anna Birch, design by Madelon Schwirtz. Lighting designer: Peter Nigrini, technical manager: Simon Taylor, sound and music consultant: Jessica Higgs, film consultant: Vivienne Dick. Cast: Faith Tingle, Rosy Fordham, Lucy Burden, Sherlina Chamberlain.

1996 *Dogs are Alone Too and They Live!* Central St Martins College of Art and Design, and Hogeschool moor Kunsten, Utrecht. Performance installation in art gallery. Concept and design: Madelon Schwirtz, directed by Anna Birch. Cast: Tracy Bickley, Lucy Burden

Films and new media

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Cochrane Theatre: webcam experiment with actors and play-texts, produced by Fragments and Monuments, artistic director Anna Birch

Di's Midsummer Night Party Keyworx version: live edit directed by Anna Birch, with Jana Riedel as Keyworx operator

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